

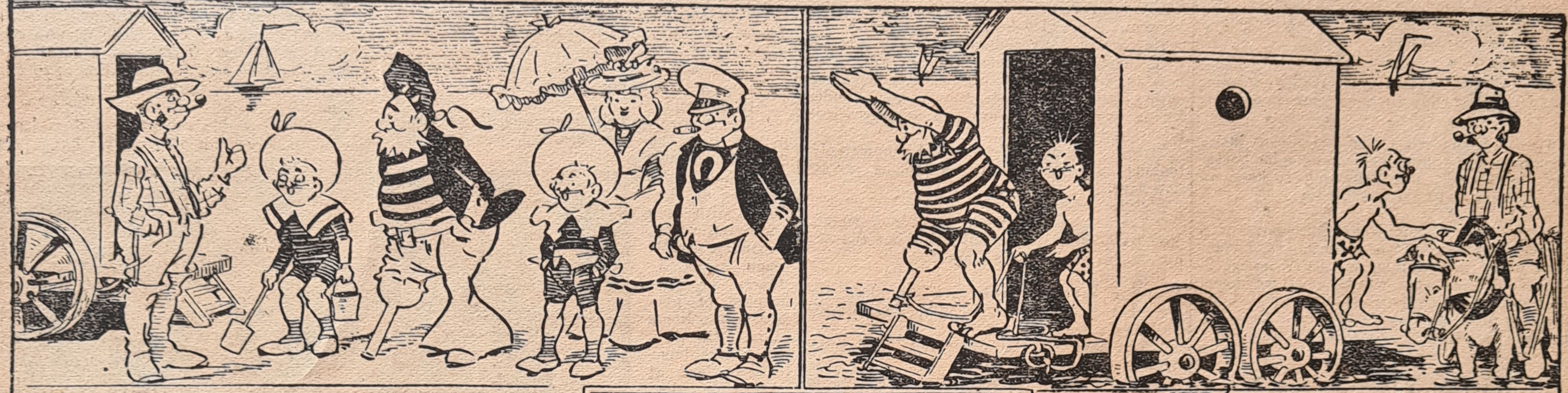
FUNNY CUTS

EDITED BY GORDON PHILLIP HOOD.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE World's Comic. 24 PAGES ONE PENNY.

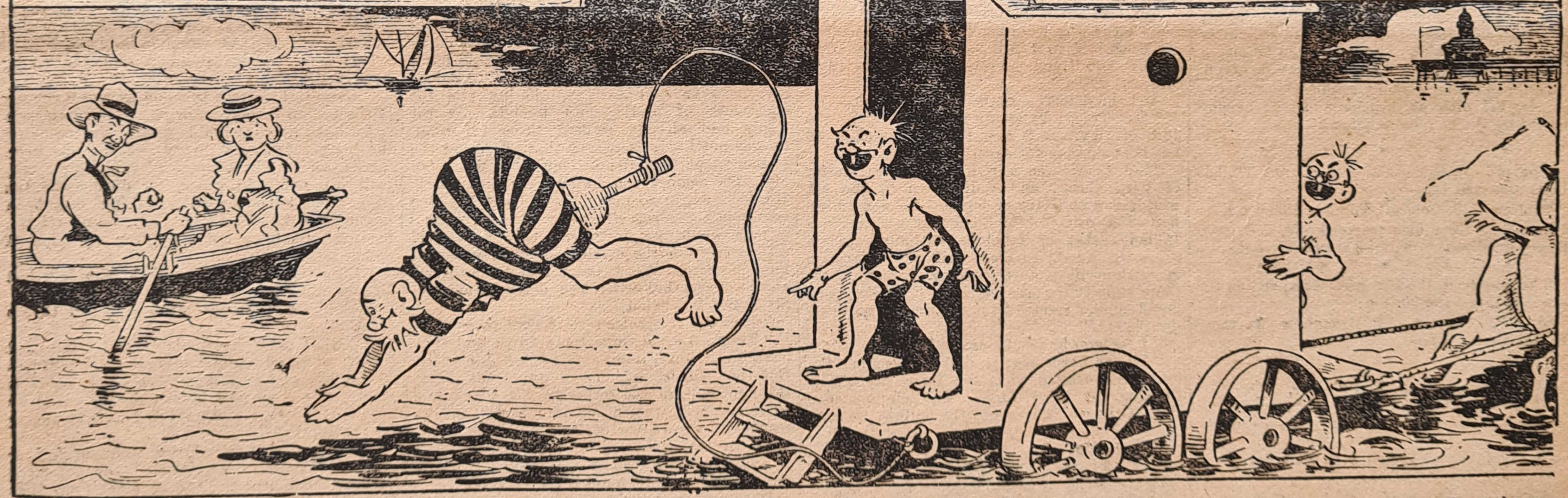
No. 785. Vol. XXXI.] REGISTERED. SEPTEMBER 16, 1905.

THE TWICKENHAM TWINS TAKE A SWIMMING LESSON.

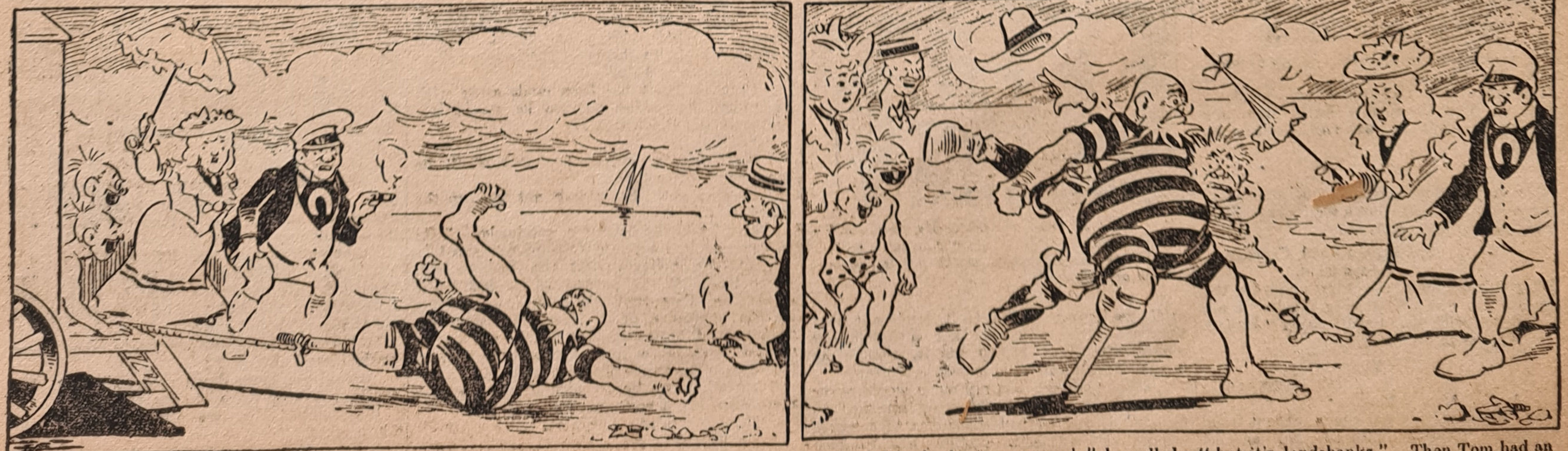


1.—THE holidays are commencing, and people are flocking to the seaside, Papa and Mamma Cheerychub among the rest, and they took Tom Towline and the twins along with 'em. Now, Tom said he'd teach the twins to swim, so they made tracks for the bathing vans. "Ere y-ar, gents!" cried the proprietor, "'ere's the very machine as was used by 'is rible 'ighness—"

2.—"The Dook o' Seven Dials." "Nar, me lad," says Tom, "I'll show yer 'ow ter dive, so keep yer eyes on me." But he was a long time before he could make up his mind to take that dip, so Bobbie thought he'd better tie a piece of rope to Tom's wooden leg, and fasten him to the bathing machine—



3.—For fear he might get washed out to sea. And while Bobbie was fixing that safety rope to Tom's pusher, Billy was making arrangements with the proprietor to have the van drawn up into shallow water, for fear Tom might get drowned. You see, they didn't want to loose him, 'cos they are offly fond of the old sea dog, but it was a bit awkward for Tom when he happened to plunge into the briny just as the horse started the bathing machine.



4.—And when Tom felt the jerk and found himself dragged through the water at twenty knots an hour, a fearful thought came into his napper. "Sharks!" he gurgled, as he swallowed part of the ocean. "Sharks! as I'm a sea dog." Well, it's a case of Davy Jones's locker this time, but when he was suddenly jerked out of the briny and dragged up the beach like a tin kettle tied to a dog's tail, why, he got real spikoy.

5.—"It's sharks, sure enough," he yelled; "but it's landshanks." Then Tom had an interview with the bathing machine man, and they got to rather high words, as the above little sketch will prove. The evening papers called it a disgraceful scene on the beach, and Ma said it was scandalous. But, of course, it wasn't our twins' fault this time, was it? Dear, dear! Did we hear somebody say perhaps? Well, well, what next?

TO OUR WORLD.

Remember your Editor's address:—Mr. Gordon P. Hood, Funny Cuts, Farringdon Avenue, London. Write to him on any subject you like; he will answer you in this column.

THE winners of our famous Cricket Sets for the week ending June 24th, are as follows:—

- (1) Maurice Keane, 4, Skinner Street, Swansea—30 coupons.
(2) William McCarty, 33, Denton Street, Carlisle—60 coupons.
(3) Harry Fear, Bristol House, Milton Road, Weston-super-mare—30 coupons.
(4) J. Spey, 17, Beaumont Street, Manchester—86 coupons.
(5) A competitor who sent in 62 coupons, without name being filled in, will be kindly send name and address, describing the manner in which his coupons were sent in, so that we know the set falls into the right hands.
(6) H. White, 99, Falmouth Road, Elephant and Castle—23 coupons.

Any of you who have received your sets, don't forget to show them to your friends.

Those of you who have not been lucky enough to win this week must hope for better luck next week, not forgetting to keep up your pecker and have another try.

But while on the subject of this competition I must draw competitors' attention to the fact that many are sending in their coupons in such a manner that it will be small wonder if some get lost. THE COUPONS MUST BE FASTENED TOGETHER IN SOME WAY; either pin them together or stick them on a sheet of paper.

What's Your Fancy?

We are not giving you freehold houses or large estates in this little competition, but we do give

Give One Substantial Present Every Week.

Now's your chance, ask for what you want, but also state why you think it should be given: you this week. The reason can be either funny or serious, but a reason must be given.

You can make as many applications as you please, but each application must be accompanied by the coupon on page 31.

The present this week (ending June 30), has been awarded to:—

E. Jones, 16, Conduit Street, Gloucester, Who asked for a nice pocket knife, and gave a very good reason why he should have it.

The winner in the Limerick Competition for week ending June 30th is:

Mr. W. Birkett, 29, Greenhow Terrace, Newcastle-on-Tyne,

Who sends:—

There was an old lady of Clewer, Who rode a new bike, and it threw her. A butcher came by and said "Missus, don't cry," And he fastened her on with a skewer.

Write your limerick on a half sheet of paper, cut out the coupon on page 31, fill in your name and address, and send on to Mr. G. Hood, FUNNY CUTS' Office, London, and I will give a prize of

FIVE SHILLINGS

every week to the reader who, in my opinion, sends in the best one.

REMEMBER YOU CAN SEND IN AS MANY TRIES AS YOU LIKE, BUT EACH LIMERICK MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE COUPON ON PAGE 31.

It is very evident our presents give great satisfaction. Here is what a reader says about the one he has just received:

18, Oakfield Road, Croydon, June 22nd.

DEAR SIR,—Thank you very much for the Fountain Pen; it writes very nicely. I am writing this with it. I shall enjoy "FUNNY CUTS" more than ever now.

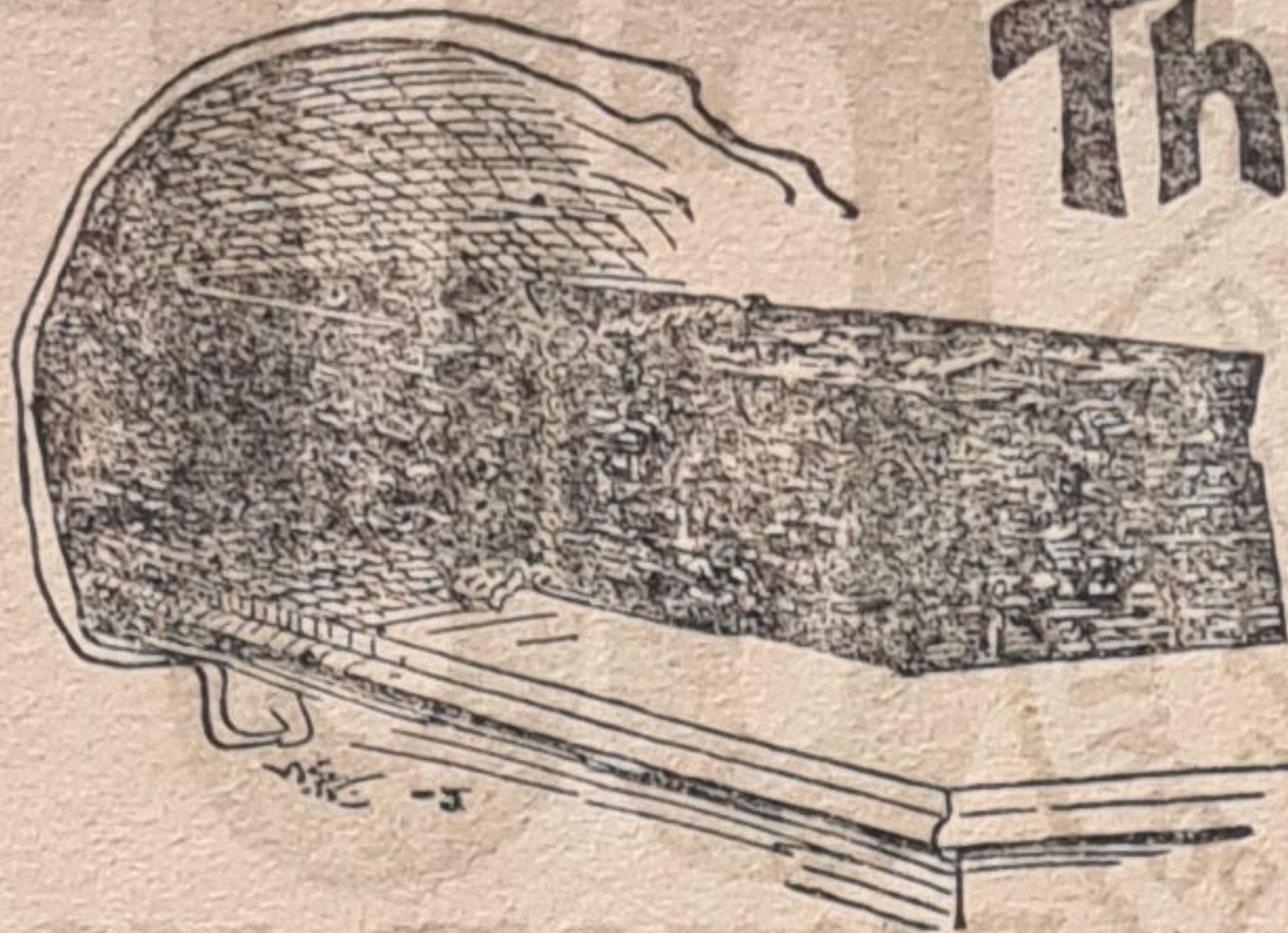
Yours truly, ROY BARTLETT.

Now, why shouldn't you win a present from the paper. "Get a hump on you," as the Yankees say. Pull yourself together, and see what we have in store for you.

Always yours, GORDON PHILIP HOOD.

The Black Box.

A Detective Story.



A BAFFLING MYSTERY.

Harley Staines, detective, looked at the card, and an expression of satisfaction came over his clear-cut face.

"Show him in, Tony." "George Seymour," murmured the detective. "The nephew of Sir Tracy Vane, the missing baronet. I am glad he has come to me."

He rose as Tony showed the caller into the little cozily-furnished office. A tall, fine-looking young fellow was George Seymour, with a frank, manly face, though now clouded by an expression of care and anxiety which he could not conceal.

"Harley Staines?" he said, inquiringly, looking with interest at the famous private detective.

Staines nodded. "Yes. I am glad to see you, Mr Seymour. You have called to consult me about the disappearance of Sir Tracy Vane?"

"Exactly." George Seymour sunk into the chair the detective pushed towards him, and Harley Staines resumed his seat.

"You have heard all about it?" the young man questioned.

"I have heard a good deal. The whole country is talking of it. But I have no doubt that you, as Sir Tracy's nephew, can tell me some circumstances I am as yet unacquainted with. It is a most peculiar case, and has excited my interest. I have made some notes of it." The detective drew a little leather notebook from a pigeon-hole of his desk.

"You wish me to investigate the case?" "That is why I am here."

"Good. Then I will tell you exactly what I know, and if you can improve my knowledge, you will do so."

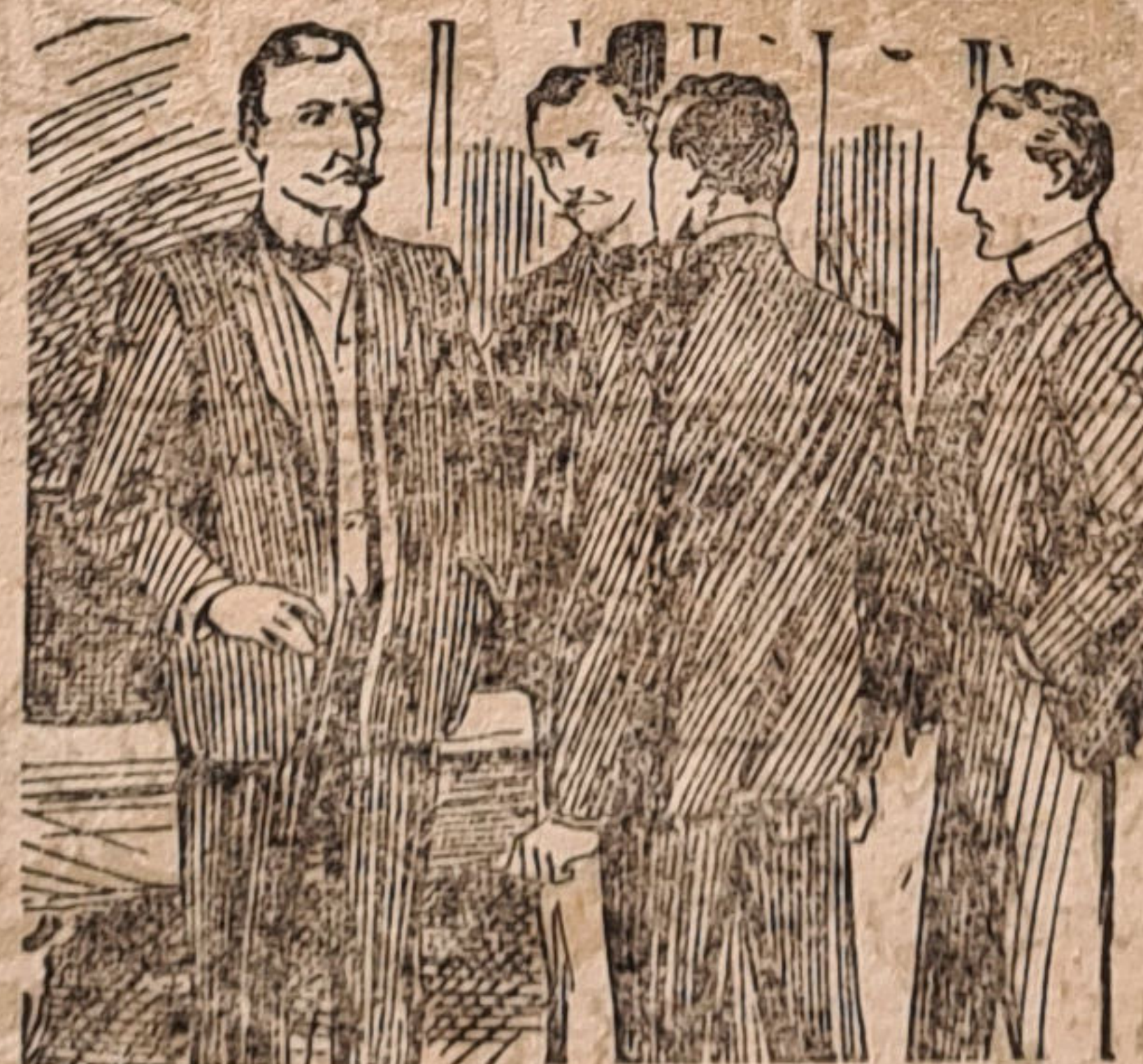
And the detective opened his notebook.

"Sir Tracy Vane disappeared upon the 12th of May. It is now the 22nd, and so he has been missing for exactly ten days."

"Sir Tracy was a rich landowner, master of Vane Chase, and well-known in the art world, as a collector of curios. He was known best as the owner of the Black Box, a mysterious Indian casket of fabulous antiquity, of an unknown wood, covered with inscriptions in an unknown picture writing, which bears some affinity to the ancient Egyptian, but is not similar enough to it to allow of its being deciphered."

"I see you know the casket."

"I have never seen it, but I remember the interest it excited when Sir Tracy brought it to England from India. The circumstance that, although it is evidently hollow, there is



"This is mere nonsense, Mr. Staines," said Colonel. "You came here, I believe, to do detective work, not to waste time over curios."

exists no known opening to it, renders it very peculiar. I have heard that a connoisseur offered Sir Tracy £3,000 for it, though he bought it for a thousand rupees in Multan."

"That is correct, but my uncle would never part with it. He was strangely attached to the casket, and he had some idea of a secret being hidden within it. Nothing would induce him to break it, but he was never tired of seeking to find an opening."

"But he never succeeded?" "Never to my knowledge."

The detective resumed his notebook. "Merton Vane, Sir Tracy's nephew and heir, has taken the head at the Chase, but he has not assumed the title, as he still clings to the belief that his uncle is alive. In the event of Sir Tracy's death being definitely proved, he will be Sir Merton Vane, with a rent-roll of seven thousand a year."

"Another nephew of the missing man has a theory that the disappearance of Sir Tracy has some connection with the Black Box," added the detective, reading aloud.

"That is myself," interrupted George Seymour.

Harley Staines wetted his pencil with his lips. "Tell me your reason for supposing so. The statement you made to the police has been variously reported in the papers."

"It is only a theory, and I must not be understood as accusing anybody."

"Of course." "But I cannot help regarding it as suspicious that the man has not re-appeared. About two months ago, when I was staying at the Chase with my uncle and cousin, an Indian gentleman appeared there, for the purpose of purchasing the Black Box. He declared the box to have been at one time the property of the priests of Sommath, and to have been taken from them centuries ago by raiding

Afghans. Ever since that time, the priests have been endeavouring to reclaim it as it is connected in some way with their worship. The Indian gentleman, whose name was Jamsetjee, used every endeavour to induce my uncle to part with it, offering him the equivalent of a thousand pounds. As Sir Tracy had already refused three thousand, he was not likely to accept that offer, and the Indian departed, denouncing the wrath of his gods against the impious English sahib. He declared, in so many words, that the men who kept the Black Box away from its original owners would be destroyed, that he should disappear from the earth and no man should know his fate. We all laughed at these threats at the time, but after the disappearance of Sir Tracy I recalled them."

"How did the police receive your theory?" "They attached importance to it, and they have ever since been seeking for Jamsetjee. But he has completely disappeared. Now, the vanishing of the owner of the Black Box so extensively known, could scarcely fail to reach the knowledge of one so deeply interested in the casket. He must know about it and know that he is suspected. If he is innocent, why does he not come forward?"

Harley Staines nodded. "You are inclined to think, then," said Seymour, eagerly, "that this Indian may have had a hand in the disappearance of my poor uncle?"

"I think it is very probable," said Harley Staines. "What does your cousin, Merton Vane, think of this theory of the Indian?" "He thinks as I do."

"That Sir Tracy has been made away with by Indian emissaries because he would not part with the Black Box?"

"Yes." "Then, as the present possessor of it, he cannot feel quite secure?"

"He does not. He intends not to keep the Black Box."

"Ah!" said the detective, carelessly. "He will present it, I suppose, to some museum?" "No. He believes that the Hindoo will never leave off the pursuit of it, and he is determined that they shall not be gratified by the possession of it, after destroying our uncle, and I must say that were I the owner of it, I would do a great deal to keep it from falling into the hands of the scoundrels."

"But what can he do with it, if he wishes neither to keep it nor to give it away?" "There is a third alternative."

"To destroy it?" "Yes."

The detective started a little. "That seems a terrible vandalism, when the box is so precious a curio."

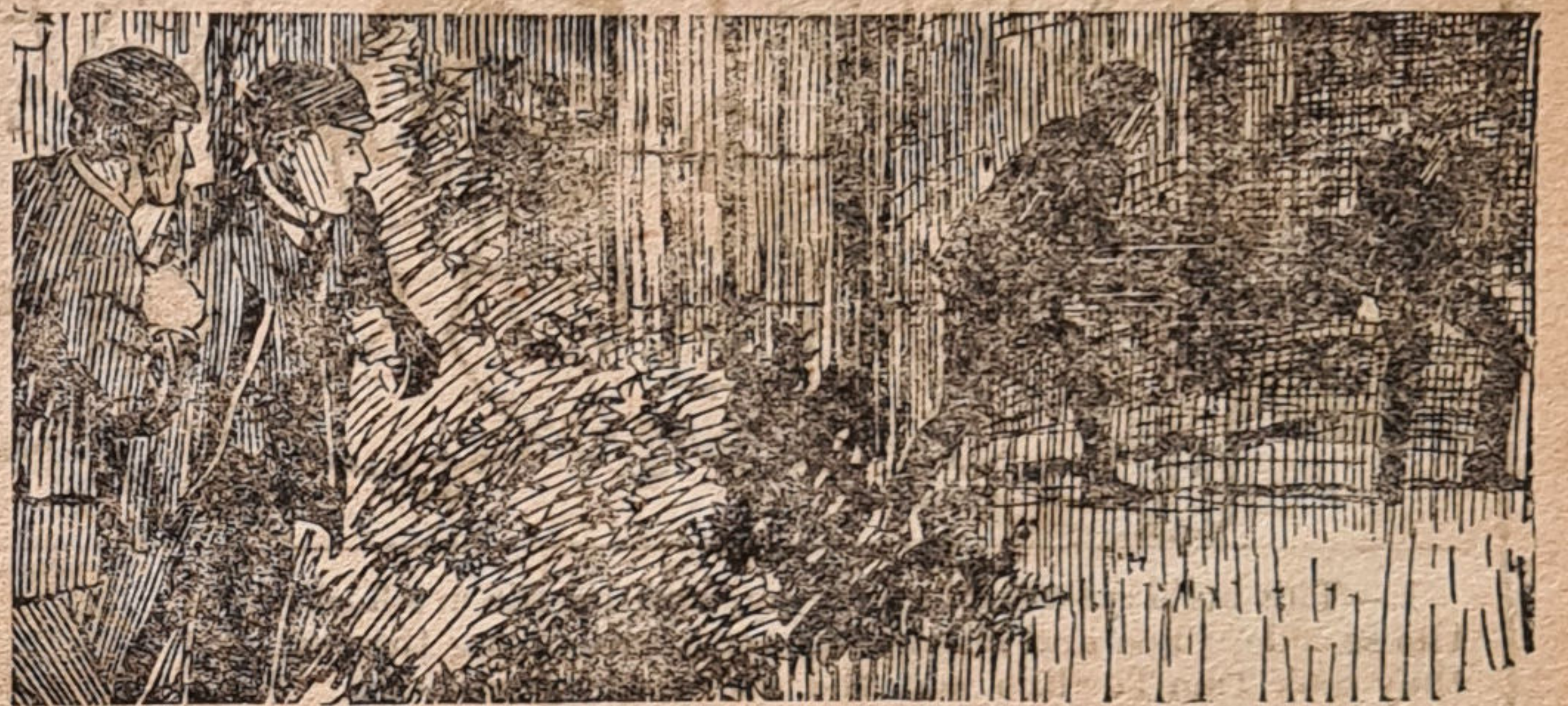
"It is a fatal possession, and he is resolved that it shall never find its way back to the temple of Sommath, to gratify the villains who have taken away our uncle."

"You approve of his plan?" "I must say I do."

The detective looked into his notebook again. "Tell me if these particulars taken from the papers, are correct. Sir Tracy Vane stayed down alone on the night of the 12th of May, in the library. He usually smoked a cigar with Merton Vane before retiring, but on this particular evening Merton was gone to bed. The library has French windows, opening upon a lawn on the west side of the house, bounded on the further side by a wall, on the other side of which runs the high road from Netley to Darwich. It was a warm night and those French windows were open when Merton Vane bade good-night to his uncle and went upstairs. They were still open in the morning, when it was discovered that the baronet's bed had not been slept in. Search was made for him, in the grounds, and his hat was found near the garden wall, but no other trace of him. The ground was trampled in places. That was all. Of the baronet, living or dead, nothing was seen, and has not been seen for ten days."

"That is correct."

"The only possible theory is that violence was used to carry him off from his home. It



The two figures came on again, and in the dim night it could be seen that they were carrying a long, coffin-looking object between them.

is impossible to say whether he is alive or dead. If alive, he is kept prisoner somewhere, but where? If dead, where is the body?"

"It is a terrible puzzle," said the young man, sadly.

"Everything seems to point to the accuracy of the Indian theory. For an ordinary assassin could have no conceivable motive for removing the body. And the theory that he has been carried off for the purpose of extorting blackmail will not hold water, for during the ten days that have elapsed, nothing has been heard from the abductors. Yet, I understand, his relations have not yet given up hope of seeing him again."

"I am afraid that I have little hope left, but Merton still clings to it."

"Ah! He was very much attached to his uncle?"

"Well, I don't know about that. He used to have words with him sometimes on the subject of debts," said Seymour. "I think he is a good deal cut up now because he feels that he didn't do all that was expected of him during uncle's lifetime."

"Ah, yes, that is a very common feeling after the death of a relation," the detective assented, with a nod. "Mind, I don't say that I give up hope. But I should not advise too great an expectation of seeing Sir Tracy alive again. There are, I believe, a number of disused pits on the moor within a short distance of the Chase."

"The police are searching there, but so far they have found no trace. The task is almost hopeless, for there are a great number of the pits, some extending to unknown depths."

"I suppose Mr. Vane is in accord with you in this stop you have taken in calling me into the case?" the detective said, abruptly.

Seymour hesitated. "Please be frank."

"Well, to tell the truth, he opposed it at first. He has a prejudice against private detectives, and he thinks that the police will do all that can be done."

"But your opinion was different?" "Well, I think we ought to leave no stone unturned. He gave way when he found that I was determined, and now he is as willing as I am that you should come."

"It will be necessary for me to come down to the Chase, of course?"

"Could you come down with me now? We shall put you up there, of course."

"Certainly. You are still staying at the Chase, then?"

"Yes; Merton wants me to."

"You are on good terms with your cousin?" Seymour looked a little surprised at the question, but he answered it.

"Oh! yes. We have had our rubs, but since

this terrible happening we have pulled together in the most cordial way."

The detective rose. "We'll have a further chat as we go down," he said. "I'll be ready in a few minutes if you'll excuse me."

And a quarter of an hour later they were seated in the train, speeding westward from the smoky city to the green fields of Berkshire.

HARLEY STAINES INVESTIGATES.

Merton Vane welcomed the detective very civilly to the Chase.

He was a tall, thin, rather languid young man, a good deal like his cousin George in features, but evidently of a weaker character. His chin was not firm, and his pale blue eyes had a look in them that was not quite steady. His expression showed how the anxiety of the last few days had told upon him.

"It is very good of you to take up the case, Mr. Staines," he said. "I really think that the police will do everything that can be done, but if your investigations throw any light upon the fate of my poor uncle, then we shall all be greatly obliged."

"I shall do my best," said Staines, modestly.

"For my part, I think that Seymour has taken a very wise step!" exclaimed a gentleman to whom the detective had been introduced, a Colonel Luscombe, who was staying at the Chase. "We have heard of your reputation, Mr. Staines, and I certainly shall be much surprised if you do not throw some light upon this most mysterious matter."

The detective looked pleased and flattered. "I shall do my best to deserve your good opinion," he said, with a bow. "At all events, there can be no harm in making an investigation."

"That's certainly very true," the colonel agreed. "After lunch we'll make a tour of the place, and point out everything to you, and you can form your own opinion as to what happened on the night of the 12th of May."

During lunch the cousins were mostly silent, but the colonel talked a good deal.

Harley Staines listened to him, and it was evident from his manner that he was a good deal impressed by the colonel. So evident was it that once or twice George Seymour cast towards him a look almost of contempt. For George was keen enough to rate the colonel at his true worth.

Luscombe was a tall, broad-shouldered man of thirty-five, and had evidently seen service in a tropical clime, his complexion telling as much. And, indeed, his conversation ran mostly on India and military life there.

He had left the army a few years ago, but he gave no hint as to what his present occupation might be. George knew it well enough—turf-touting and betting, ecarte and bridge at the clubs which still suffered his presence, and card-sharpping with such simpletons as Merton Vane. George wondered that the detective did not see through and through the colonel. But he did not appear to do so.

After lunch they adjourned to the library, the room from which the baronet had so mysteriously disappeared.

It was a long apartment, lined with bookshelves, and the French windows at the end opened upon a sunny bit of lawn.

Leaving the three men in the library, the detective crossed the lawn to the garden wall, and looked about him there carefully.

He came in again, giving a nod of the head as if he were very well satisfied about something or other.

"I should like to see the Black Box," he remarked. "It is not kept in this room, I perceive?"

"No; it is kept in Sir Tracy's study, which adjoins," said George. "This is the room."

He pushed open a little door, which led into a cosily-furnished study. The Black Box was the first object which caught the detective's eye.

He knew it by description, and he looked at it now with deep interest.

It was a strange-looking casket. It was more than six feet long, about two and a-half feet wide, and a foot deep.

The exterior was covered with curious designs done in relief. There were mis-shapen dragons and crocodiles, flying reptiles, and men with the heads of dogs and horses. With these, interspersed, were inscriptions in what was evidently a picture writing akin to the system of the ancient Egyptians—akin and yet different. What wood the box was made of it was impossible to tell; it was of no known kind. It was almost jetty black, with here and there a glimmer on its shiny surface of brown or red. A strange, clinging scent came from it.

A scent that lingered, and yet that could not be exactly defined.

The box lay upon a low table, to which it was secured with a strong padlock and chain, so that it could not possibly be lifted.

Harley Staines looked at it with a curious gaze.

"That would be a difficult handful for a man to tackle," he said. "It would not be an easy

object for the Indian gentleman to steal, if he had come with that purpose."

"My poor uncle had it padlocked, as you see, in case of some such attempt," Seymour remarked.

"It is hollow, of course?" the detective remarked.

"Oh! yes," said Colonel Luscombe, promptly.

"It may not, then, be so heavy as it looks. Have you the key of the padlock, Mr. Vane?"

Merton Vane shook his head. "My uncle always carried it, and it has no duplicate."

"Then when you went to remove the box you will have to force the lock?"

"I suppose so."

"A strange-looking box. It puts one in mind of a coffin, does it not?"

Merton Vane turned pale.

"Well, no; I shouldn't say so myself," Colonel Luscombe exclaimed. "It certainly never struck me in that light."

"Nor me," said Merton Vane.

"Yet," said the detective, "I feel pretty certain that it has been used for that purpose."

The colonel stared at him hard. Merton Vane walked to the window, and stood looking out of it upon the sunny lawn.

"What do you mean, Mr. Staines?" said Colonel Luscombe at last.

"Why, that the ancient priests to whom the box belonged certainly used it as a coffin, for the preservation of some sacred person in an embalmed state," said Harley Staines. "That is, to my mind, the only purpose it could possibly have served."

"Ah! perhaps," said the colonel, with a deep breath.

"I think it very likely," Seymour remarked.

"Yes, and if the opening could be found, I should not be surprised at finding a body in it," the detective said, casually, with his eyes fixed upon the colonel's face.

Colonel Luscombe started.

"Are you serious, Mr. Staines?"

A steely look had come into his hard eyes. "Quite serious."

"The body of some old priest?"

"Of course. I don't suppose a body has been put into it since it came to England," the detective said, laughing. "I should not be at all surprised to see some withered old Hindoo in there if the box could be opened."

"But surely the weight would have been much greater,"

objected Seymour.

"When the box first came here, before it was fastened down, I was able to lift it unaided."

"Oh! the weight of a withered old mummy would not be great,"

the detective said, carelessly.

"I understand that the opening has never been discovered?"

"Never," said the colonel.

The detective was looking at the Black Box with a keen, critical eye.

"Do you think you could find it?" said the colonel, with a slight tone of mockery in his voice.

"Yes."

The detective spoke quite calmly.

Merton Vane turned back from the window Harley Staines glanced towards him.

"I think I could. Mr. Vane, have I your permission to open the Black Box?"

He made a step towards it as he spoke.

"No," cried Merton Vane.

His face was white as a sheet.

"This is more nonsense, Mr. Staines," said the colonel, interposing, as by accident, between Harley Staines and the Black Box.

"You came here, I believe, to do detective work, not to waste time over curios."

"Really, said the detective, mildly. "I had no reason to suppose that Mr. Vane would object to the box being opened."

"I have no objection," said Merton Vane, hastily. "Nor do I believe that you could do it, Mr. Staines. But we are wasting time here."

"Well, that is true, but after ten days the loss of a few minutes will not be very serious," said the detective, with dignity. "However, let us return to business."

They went back into the library.

"You have formed a theory, Mr. Staines?"

The colonel said, all his elaborate politeness returning as soon as they were away from the mysterious Indian casket.



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CRICKET SET COUPON.

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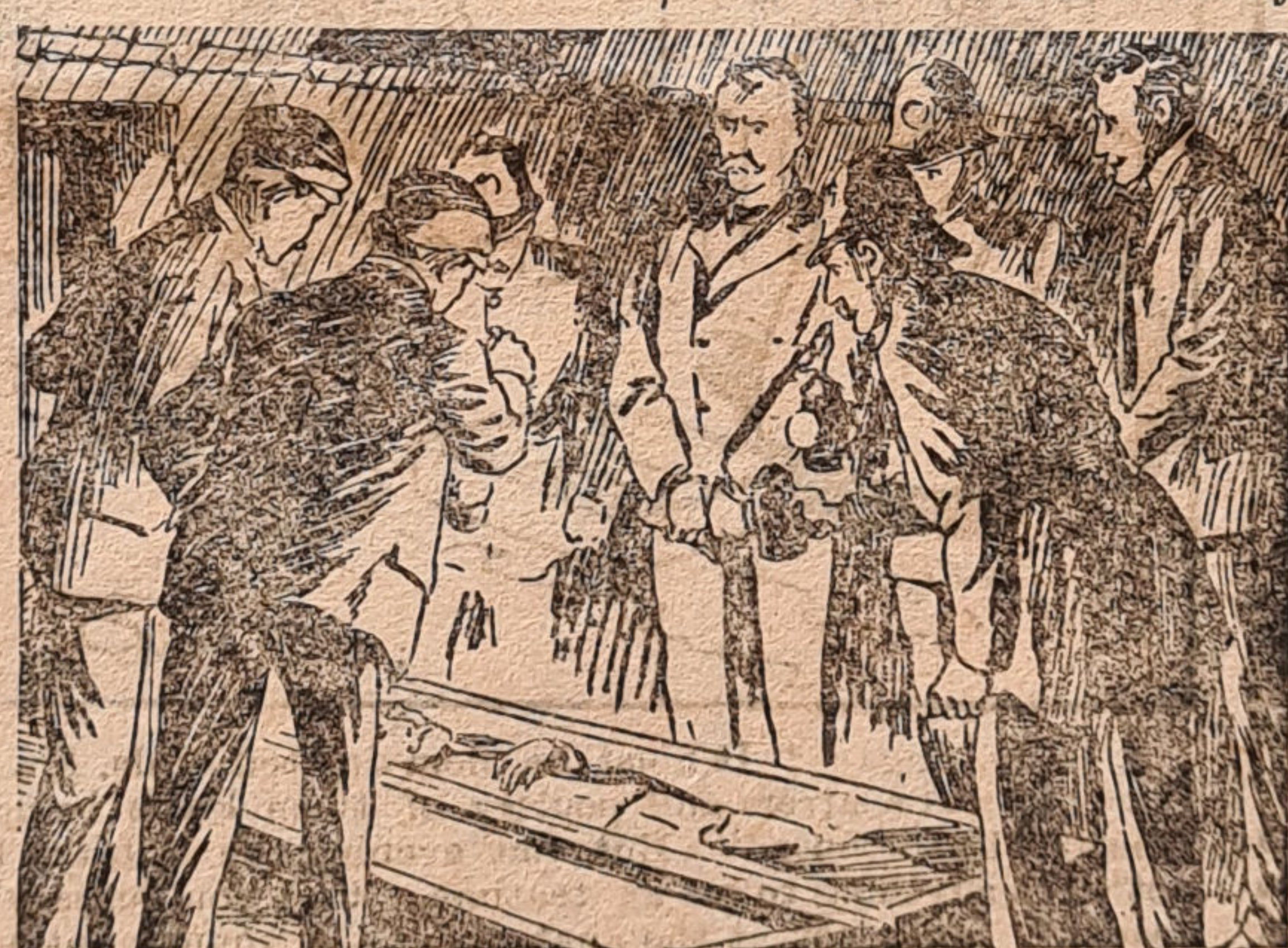
If you cannot buy all the copies of

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The policemen's lanterns flashed into the interior of the mysterious casket. There lay a man of middle age, his face white, and his eyes closed as if in death.

"Well, I don't know exactly about a theory," said Staines.

"I have an idea in my mind of what probably happened that night."

The colonel looked deeply interested.

"If it is not an indiscreet inquiry, I should like to know your opinion, Mr. Staines."

"We are entitled to know it, I imagine," said Merton Vane.

"Of course, we shall take care that it goes no further than ourselves."

"I must pledge you to that, gentlemen," said the detective, seriously. "Above all, nothing must be said to the police."

"Why so," the colonel asked.

"Because they would be glad enough to adopt my ideas, follow my ideas, my clues, and reap all the credit of the investigations I make," said Harley Staines. "I have been treated like that before. If I begin on a case I prefer not to call in the police until the time comes to make an arrest. You gentlemen may not be aware of the fact, but there does not exist the best of feeling between the private detectives and the regular police."

"I've heard something of that before," smiled the colonel. "I think I may say that you can depend upon us to see that you have fair play."

"Without doubt," said Merton Vane.

"Certainly," said George Seymour.

The detective bowed.

"I am greatly obliged to you," he said. "This, then, is my opinion of what may have taken place that night. Mind, I say what may have taken place, for I do not commit myself to this as a theory. Sir Tracy Vane was left alone in the library with the French windows open. We know that an Indian, Jamssetjee, had expressed determination to possess the Black Box, and had threatened that the baronet would disappear. Now, let us suppose that Jamssetjee—if that was his name, which I very much doubt," the detective added, with a wise

shake of the head. "Let us however, for the sake of convenience, give him the name he adopted. Now, as I was saying, let us suppose that Jamssetjee came with a friend or two to try and seize the Black Box. They find the library windows open, and the baronet, perhaps asleep in his chair. Of course, that is a supposition which may be incorrect, but I think the fact that there was no alarm when he was attacked shows that he had dropped asleep in his chair."

The colonel gave a nod. "It is very probable."

"Now, the Hindoes had come for the Black Box. They have a free entrance, they might stun the baronet if he showed signs of waking. But they met with an unexpected obstacle. The casket, instead of standing loose as they might very naturally expect to find it, is chained down with a chain they have no means of breaking. They cannot hope to remove it. But the owner of it is in their power. What more natural than that they should say to themselves, that if they could not have the Black Box, they would not go empty-handed, that they would carry off Sir Tracy Vane instead, and at some future time exchange him for the prize they coveted."

George Seymour gave a cry. "Then you think he is still alive?"

Harley Staines made a gesture. "I think nothing at present. I have not enough data to go upon. I am only saying what may have happened."

"Exactly," said the colonel, with an air of deep interest. "Please go on, Mr. Staines."

The detective continued.

"It would be easy for them to seize, to bind, to gag the baronet, without giving the alarm, in my opinion. They could easily convey him over that wall. I have examined it, and pronounce it easy, if there were two of them. Or even one, if he were a powerful man. About what size was this Jamssetjee?" asked Staines, looking at George Seymour.

"A big strong fellow," said George, "about the colonel's build."

"Then he might have done it himself," said Harley Staines, whose eyes had glittered for a moment. "If this sketch of possibilities proves to be correct, he, or they, still hold Sir Tracy Vane a prisoner, perhaps at a considerable distance from here. For you will observe that they must have brought a vehicle of some kind to convey away the Black Box, and they could as easily have conveyed away Sir Tracy."

"Jove!" exclaimed the colonel, "it begins to look certain."

"If so, they are holding him, either in the

(Continued on page 31).

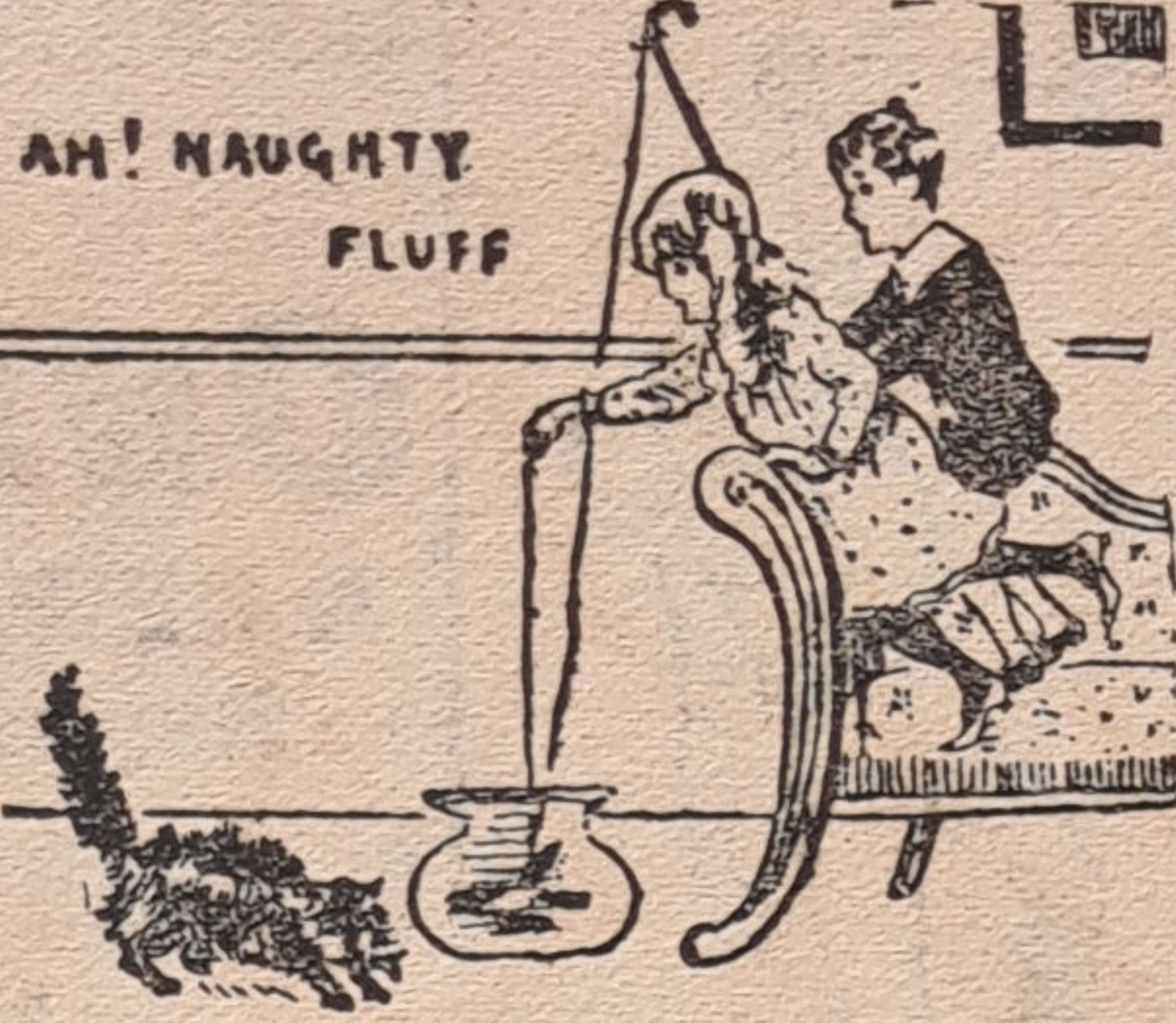
THE SWEET LITTLE BLUE-EYED DARLINGS.

WE WILL BE GOOD.



1.—They were sweet little blue-eyed darlings, and were on a visit to their auntie, who had to go out for a time. "Good-bye, auntie, dear, we'll be such good children."

AH! NAUGHTY FLUFF



2.—"What shall we do?" "Let's go fishing in auntie's gold-fish bowl. It's just as good as fishing off the rocks." "Yes; but I wish Fluff hadn't eaten the one we caught."

OH! 'CRIKEY'



3.—"Oh, look! the dickie has flown out of the window? Auntie will be so angry."

WHAT HO' NIAGARA.

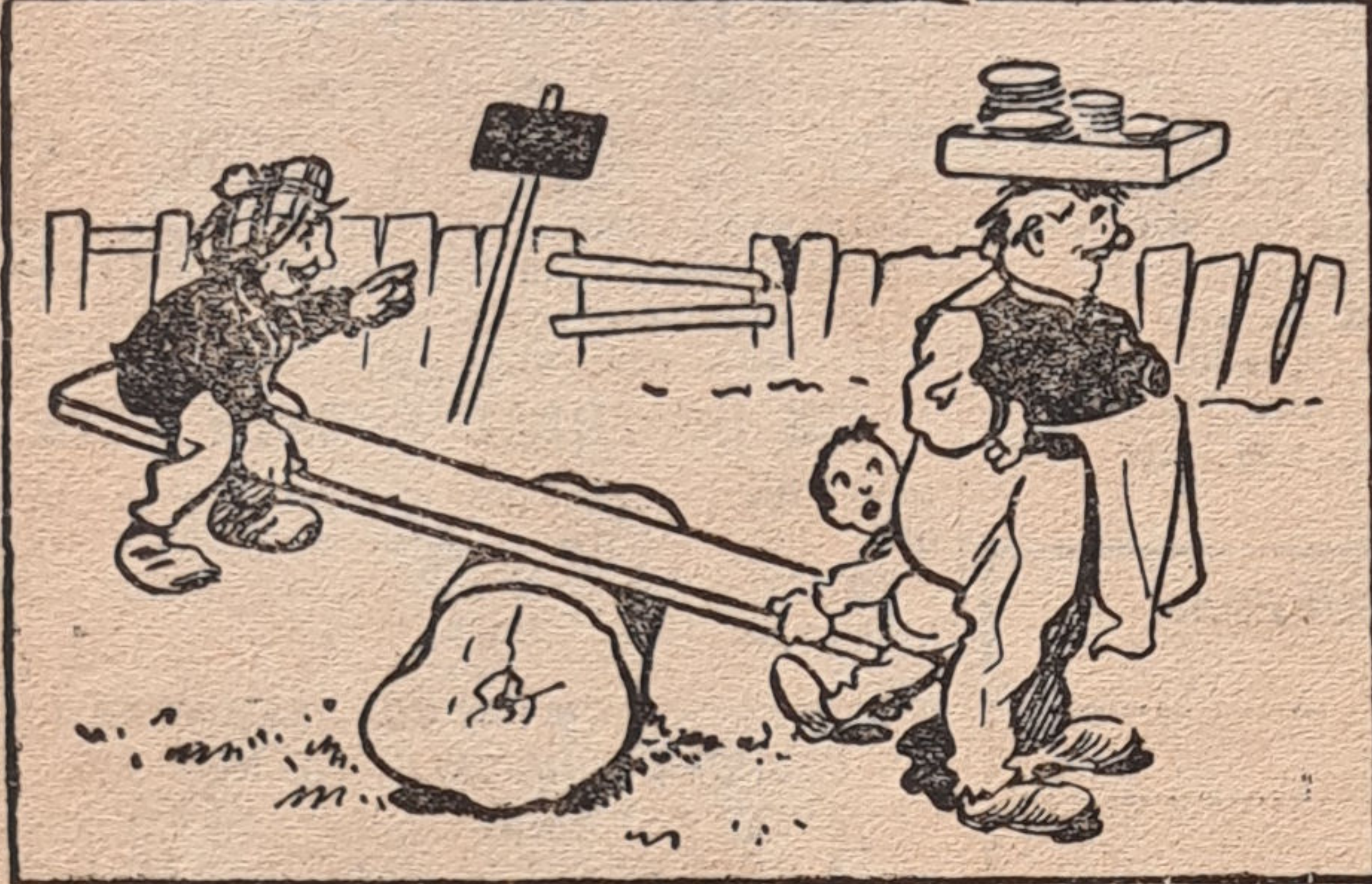


4.—Next they turned their attention to the bath-room. They turned on the taps and made a most beautiful waterfall.

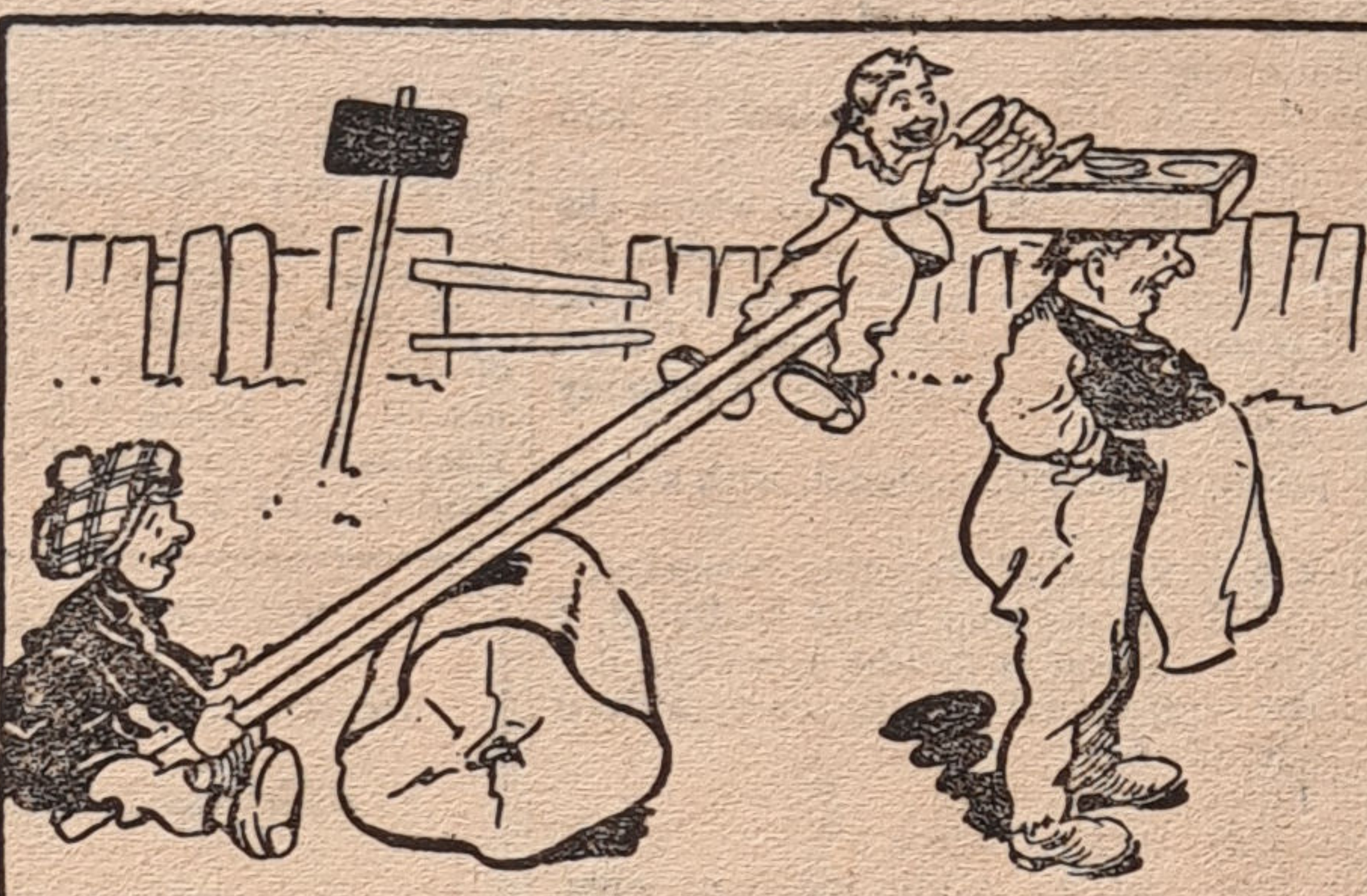


5.—And the water into the hall, and it was just having a go when auntie returned. 6.—And Nemesis overtook them.

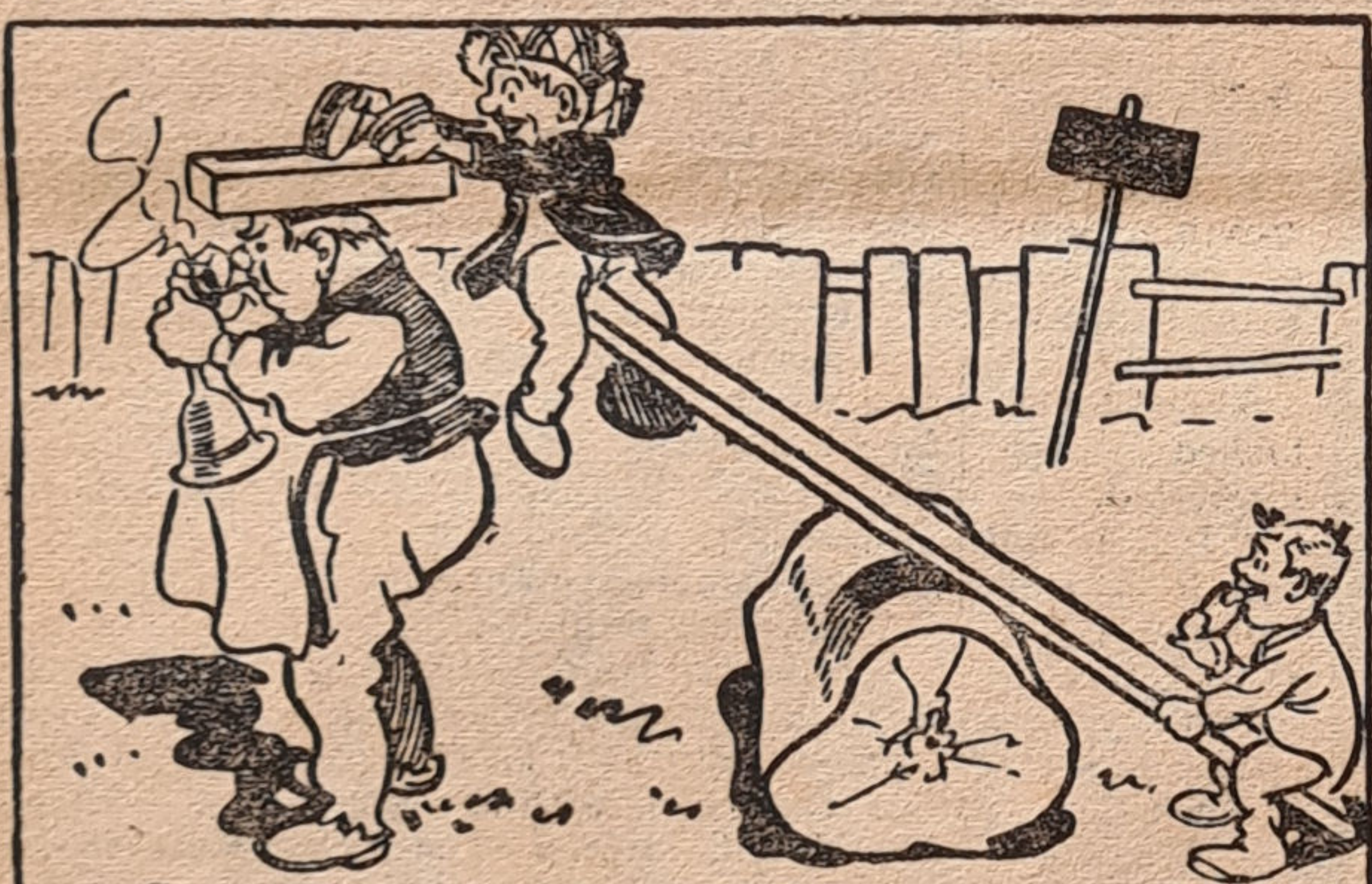
THE BOLD BOBSTAY BOSS MAKE A HAUL.



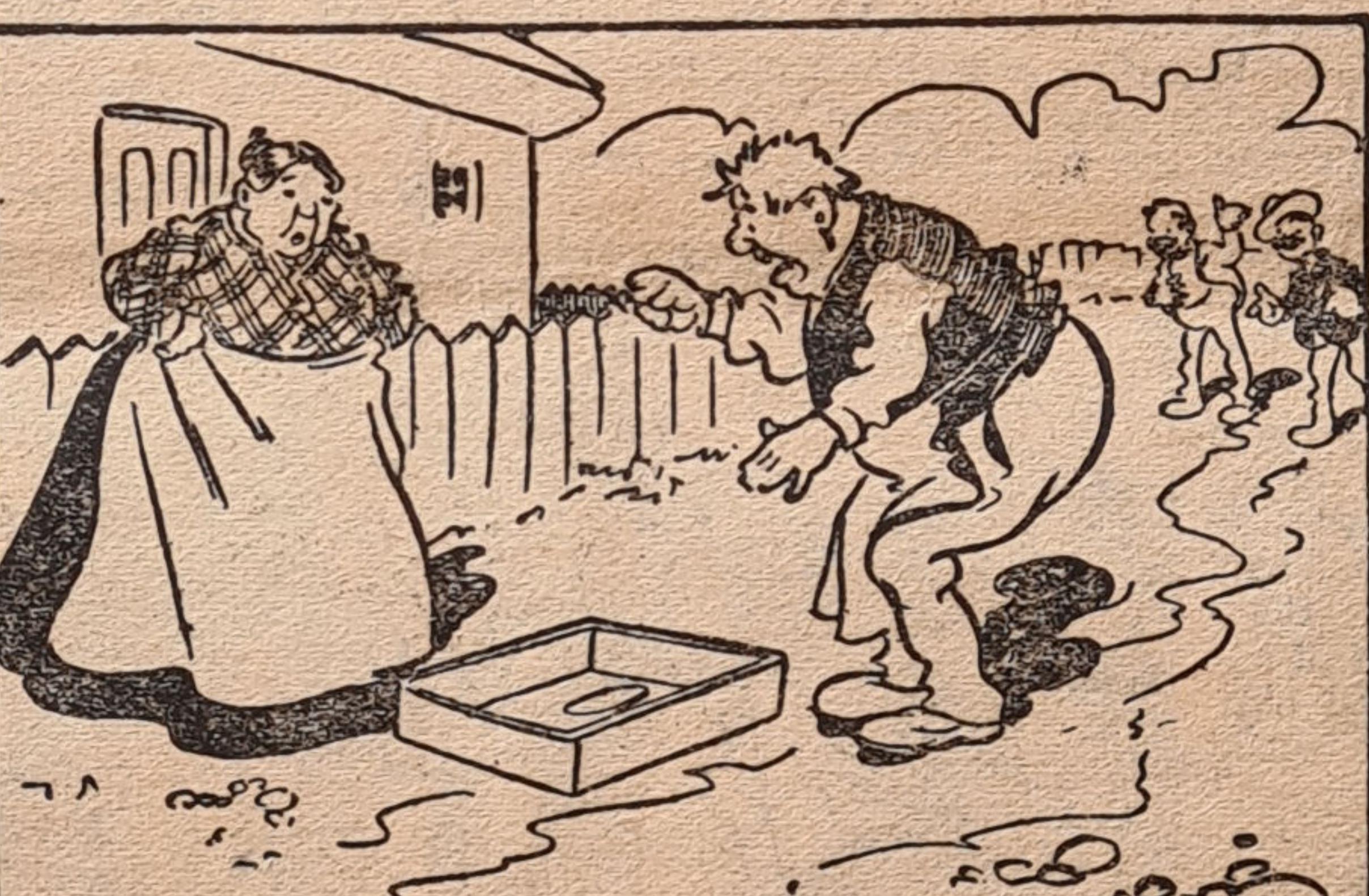
1.—MISTER MARMADUKE MONTAGU MOGGS, the Mughtown muffin merchant, is in a deep brown study looking after the pretty slavey over the common, and thinking what an ikey little fourth wife she'd make him, if he could only get rid of the present Mrs. Moggs. Twig what the boys are thinking of, dear reader?



2.—"Well, you're quite right! Those bold, bad Bobstays were after the old mug's muffins, and serve him right, for standing looking after other fellers' tarts, too!"



3.—While at the other end he stopped ter light his pipe, the other nigger has a bit of a look in, and very nigh clears out the whole stock. "Hif there's one thing more'n another I likes, Andrew, it's muffins, with good air sauce, fresh from the cow."



4.—Mrs. Iggs: "It must be them dratted birds, Mr. Moggs: Starlings and sparrers and poultry of them kinds being werry plentiful hereabouts." But that evening the Bobstay boys did not want anything to eat at teatime. Can you guess why, dear reader? Just look at the anatomy of the young gentlemen below their chests, and guess again.

MOST LIKELY.



FLOSSIE: "The scales are fastened on fish just like slates on a house, aren't they auntie?" Auntie: "Yes, dear." Flossie: "I suppose they are put on that way to keep the wet out of the fish, auntie."

THE MODERN MAID.



He salesman: "Dear little hand" (absent minded), "I wonder if it will wash." She: "No, it won't—nor will it scrub, either, but if you want it to play the piano and ride a bike, it's yours, George."

NOT A STANDING ORDER.



GEORGE: "How do I stand with your father?" Mabel: "I don't think, George, you had better stand at all when you are with father; you'd better run."

BAT-BA



1.—THE boys wur takin' a prow round rooral England a-sniffin' buttercups, et cettery, when they comed across a funny figger. "Bar!" chuckled Mike, "this is a big chunk o' orl right; p'raps you see any yewse for that femail costum? Just you wait a bit, an' tonish ye!"



2.—"There y'are—wot did I tell yer, a spiffin tandem bicycle, by a lady; let's on it quick, an' under way afore the lovin' couple back."

HE DID IT WEL



1.—Mrs. JONES (to Charlie): "Now, then, Charlie, you must sit still in that chair, and not let the visitors see the hole that is in the bottom of it." 2.—And chair collap

FLATTERY, INDEED!

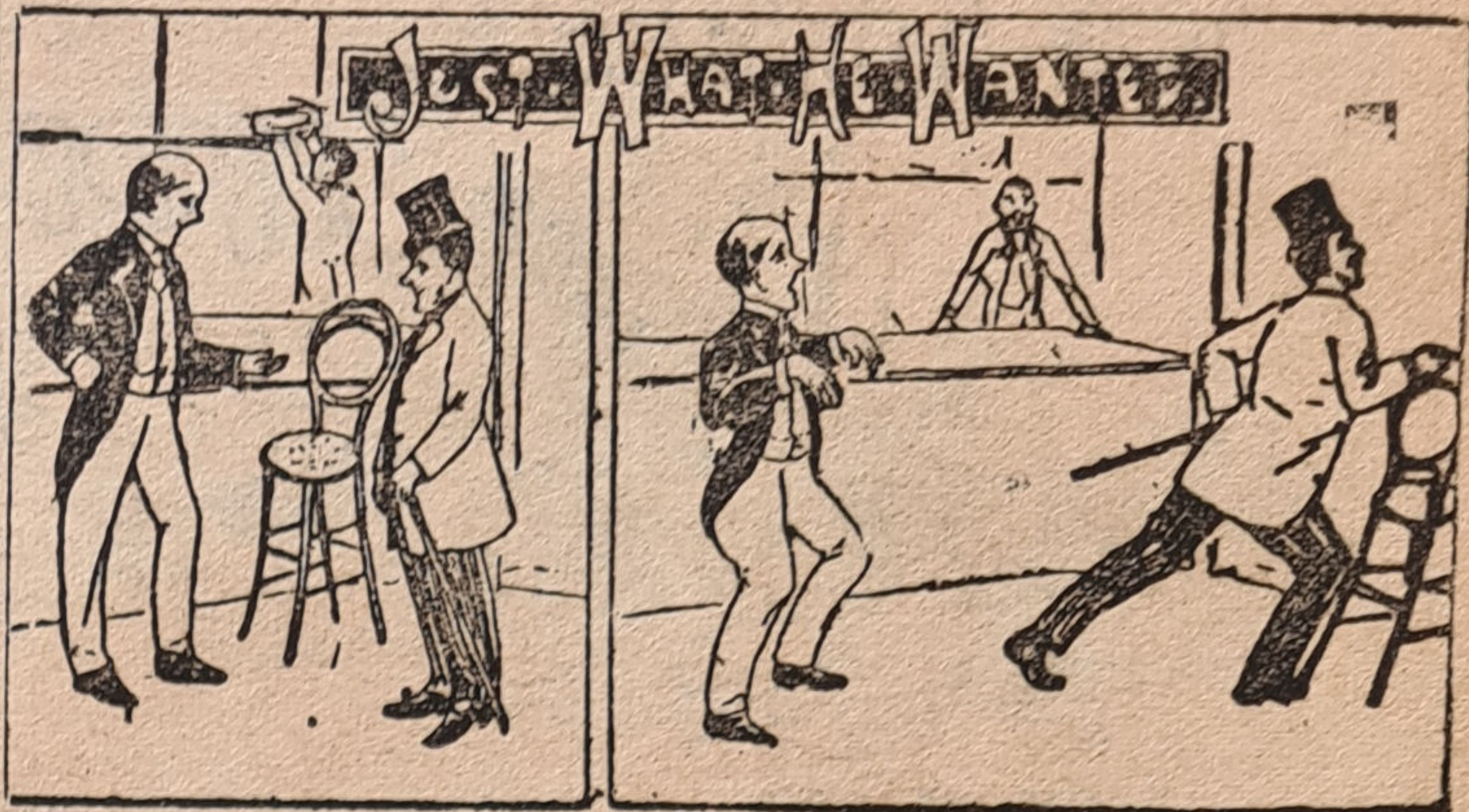


TUES: "I flatter myself that honesty is printed on my face."
GRABS: "Well—er—yes, perhaps—with some allowance for typographical errors."

SMILE, PLEASE.



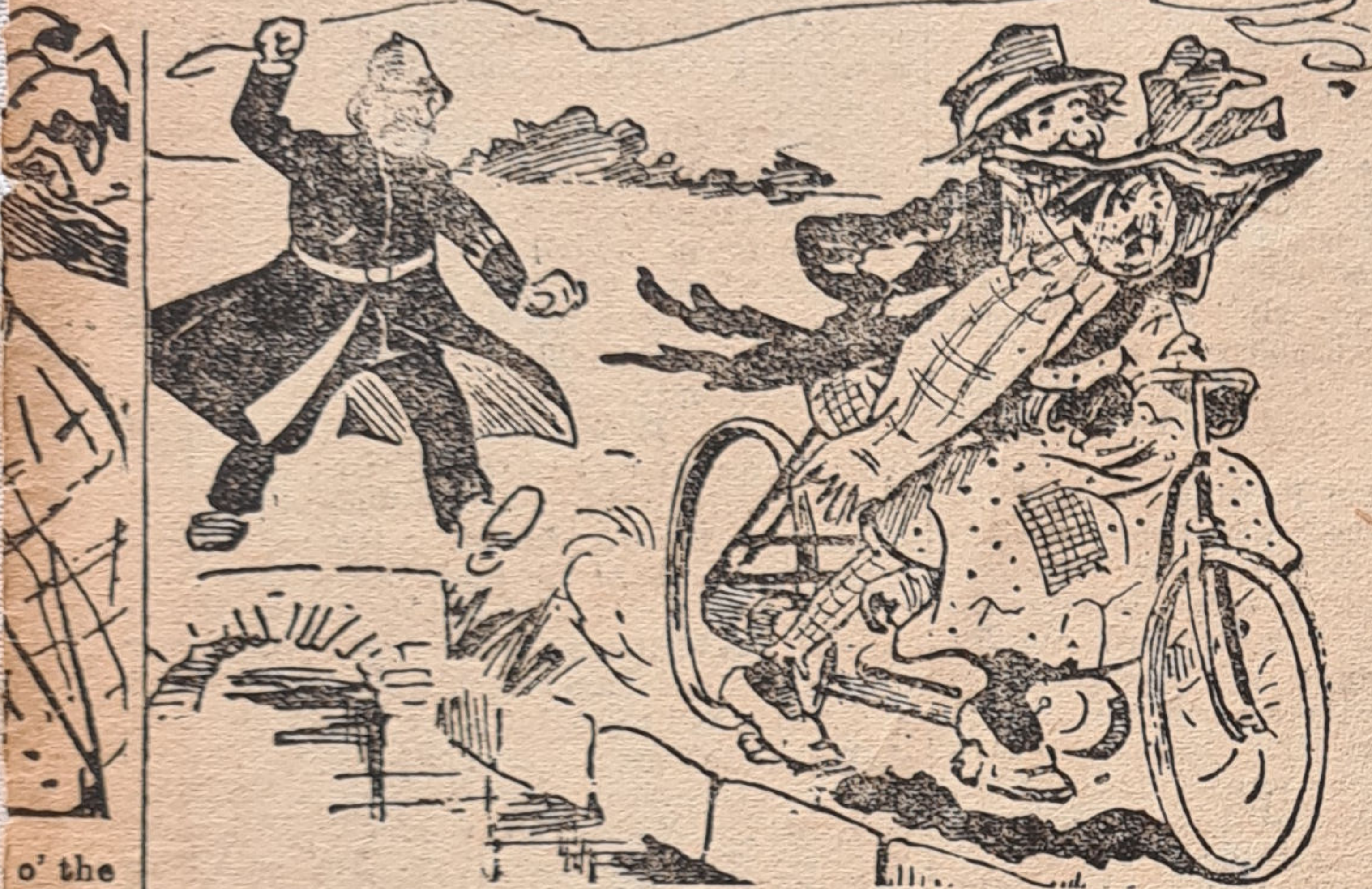
BOUNDER: "I give my horses a lot of 'ay."
FOUNDER: "You ought to give them someitches as well."



1.—"TAKE a seat, sir."

2.—"Certainly."

RED BILL AND MOOCHING MIKE COLLAR A TANDEM.



3.—"Strike me pink! ain't this scrumptious!" gurgled Mike. "Did yer notice that fat-headed bobby—ha! ha!! 'ee dunno were 'ee R." But they didn't notice that bobby spun a lasso after 'em for all that.



5.—"Elp! elp!!" yelped Bill, his mouf full o' canal mud. Meanwhile the copper lugged Mike ashore by his gownd. "The fat willin, an' 'ee's got 'isselv up like a ole woman an' all."

PATRIOTISM!



AMERICAN PARENT: "Ye traitorous young scoundrel, I'll lick the life out of ye! Chewing a stick of Spanish liquorice, indeed!"



4.—C-c-r-r-rash! wollop! wump! the noose had settled down over Mike's head, just as they wur scorchin' like billyo 'longside a deep canal. Oh, Lor!" groaned Bill, "I'm a dead 'un this journey; I can't swim in anythin' weaker'n 4-'arf!"



6.—Then the percasshun started for the lock-up. "I can't walk in these wet fings," growled Mike. "Gr-r-r!" shivered Bill, "this is anuvver o' your blessed nice tips—an' the larst—things is gottin' wuss and wuss!"

NO BUNKUM ABOUT THAT.



BAILEY-BARNUM: "Hi! what are you running for?"
INDIARUBBER MAN: "Fer a doctor, boss!"
BAILEY-BARNUM: "Why, what's up?"
INDIARUBBER MAN: "Sword swallower has just swallowed a pin!"

HARD HIT.



Charlie sat still till the bottom of the bed, and gave the show away.

ALL MOUTH.



AUNT: "So you've been to London, Charlie? How did the city strike you?"
CHARLIE (ruefully): "Struck me for every cent. I had, Auntie."

FINE COMBUSTION.



MISS GADSBY: "They tell me, Mr. Sinkor, that your wife sings with great expression."
SINKOR: "Greatest expression I've ever seen. Can't even recognise her when she's singing."

FINE COMBUSTION.



SHE: "How do I look in black, Gussie?"
HE: "Superb, dear, superb. When I saw you just now with old Money bags, I considered it a splendid combination in black and gold."

THE THREE SKIPPERS

A STRANGE STORY OF THE SEA

BY COUNT ROGER DE MALAHIDE



SKIPPER THE SECOND.
CHAPTER XVII.
THE LUCK OF RUFUS.

That bell again!

Loud, harsh, discordant, it was clanging a funeral knell—and the sound seemed to come from the midst of the thicket hard by, towards which all eyes were turned. An impulsive movement on the part of some of the mourners to rush off for the wood was sternly checked by Captain Hardie, who insisted on finishing the brief ceremony of interment before a man was allowed to stir from the spot.

As he uttered the last words:

"Clang!"

Faintly and more faintly, as though dying away in the distance or muffled close at hand:

"Clang! Clang! Clang!"

Ordering two men to remain to fill up the grave, and the carpenter to continue his work, Hardie turned to all the rest of the party with a sharp:

"Now, then!"

And headed a general scramble for the thicket, entering which the scramblers separated, so that the copse might be beaten from end to end in as short a time as possible.

The beaters emerged from it presently "anyhow"—in ones and twos and other numbers.

Nobody had anything to report—nobody had come across anything to account for what everybody had heard!

"Then the whole of this tantalising island, if necessary, shall be searched, if it takes the whole day and all to-morrow. Split yourselves up, men, into three parties. One will come with me—I shall march straight across to the coast on the other side, unless the distance proves to be greater than I think it is. Mr. Waters, you will lead a second party—take the right of the island. Dalewood, you will be in charge of the third party, please—search to the left." With a glance from the sun to his watch, he continued: "These are your general instructions, Waters—and yours, too, Dennie, of course. If special circumstances arise, act to the best of your judgment. In case of any discovery of importance, return at once, and wait. We'd better make this the meeting place—no, let it be at the spot where poor Mr. Hilton's grave is being filled up. Look at your watches, please. Whatever happens, you must be back in five hours. Part your men, but don't let them get out of hail of each other, so that all may return together. Do you both understand your orders?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" cheerily replied Waters (the third mate) and Dennie.

"Then we'll get under way at once."

Almost exactly five hours afterwards, and within five minutes of each other, the three companies met at the appointed spot, all in



"When all of us hears a awful 'oller from the boy as he comes for us full sail from the trees."

fairly fresh condition, for sweet water had been struck in abundance.

The grave had been neatly turfed over, and the few ordered words as neatly cut out on the tree-trunk; but neither the two sailors nor the carpenter had remained on the scene of their labours.

"I've nothing to report," said the skipper;

except that there's no ship in sight on the other side. We didn't get right across, but my glass covered the whole ofling from a hill I mounted. Any luck, Waters?"

"No, sir. I've come back with nothing to report."

"I have something to report, captain," said Dennie, "though I'm sorry to say I'm afraid it doesn't amount to much. Coming back, I stumbled on something that we missed in going—the unmistakable ruins of a large hut. The roof has fallen in, and the remains of the walls are almost concealed by fungus and long grasses."

"But at least your discovery is a proof that castaways have been here at some time—unless the hut was a native one, which isn't likely. You found nothing whatever that could possibly account for the bell-ringing?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"Then as soon as our repairs are finished, I'll organise a search on a bigger scale. Every man but the watch shall take part in it. As it is, we must give the thing up for to-day, and get on board again. Bo'-sun, pipe up the three absentees—I don't suppose they've wandered far afield."

Peter piped shrilly enough, but what was the sound of his whistle compared with the noise of the this time positively furious banging and clanging that once more suddenly burst out from the bell that all efforts had failed to find!—the bell that was somewhere close at hand because it *must* be, for it was sounding almost in their ears—again from the thicket—for which Hardie made no attempt to stop the rush a second time.

But as the whole party rushed for the copse, a smaller party rushed from it.

A big man in its midst carried, shoulder-high, a small boy with remarkably red hair—no other than "Rufus" of the cabin, of whom we caught a glance aboard the *Scud* in the Albert Docks, but of whom we have rather inconsiderately lost sight in the attention we have paid to his "betters."

With something more than a shade of annoyance on his face at finding so many hands ashore whom he had left busy aboard, Hardie demanded as the group halted in front of him:

"How come you men to have left the ship without leave?"

"We didn't, sir," explained the large sailor, dropping the little cabin-boy to the ground. "We had leave from Mr. Gorgio."

"How dared any of you ask for leave in the circumstances? Do you call yourselves sailormen, to shirk work for a run ashore from a ship under repairs?" exclaimed the skipper, now with an unmistakable frown on his brows.

"We didn't ask for leave, sir. Mr. Gorgio offered us it without our asking for it or even thinking about it. But of course when it was chucked at us we took it."

The questions Hardie intended to ask and have answered and the reproach he purposed to administer in the absence of some satisfactory explanation, of course he reserved for Mr. Marcus Gorgio himself.

"We've found the bell, sir!" announced the man excitedly.

"What?"

"We've found the bell, sir!"

"Found the bell?" cried Dave incredulously.

"Found the bell?" echoed voices around him.

"Yes. We heard it

ringing aboard, sir, about an hour after you left—in fact, we was told to search for the plaguery thing when we was offered shore-leave. We made for this wood here—all except this here young varmint of a boy, who 'ooked it on his own somewhere.

"We beat all through the thicket without discovering nothing, sir—"

"So did we."

"No wonder, ca'pen, when you hear the fac's—not any of us being monkeys barring this here Rufus.

"Not coming on nothing to make a note of in the wood, we come out o' the wood; and some of us was bearing a hand to fill up the grave when all of us hears a awful 'oller from the boy as he comes for us full-sail from the trees. It was a 'oller of joy, sir."

"Get on with your yarn faster, man," said Hardie sharply.

"Well, sir, he'd come to tell us as he'd found the bell, all along of his monkey tricks. And found it he cart'nly had—which is why I was sort of chairing him just now—for he took us to it, and I've just been a-ringing of it myself. We've chipped every tree with a axe on the way to it, so we can convoy you to the place without no tacking or beating about it.

"But first, sir—a-begging your pardon—maybe you'll listen to the whole yarn at first hand from him what's had the luck we all missed."

Thrusting the cabin-boy forward:

"Now then, Rufus, speak up and tell the ca'pen all about it."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE YARN OF RUFUS.

"It was like this, yer honour," began Rufus, respectfully pulling a scarlet forelock. "I'd set me 'art on coker-nuts. My wery soul haked for 'em, sir. I felt a empty void what nothink but coker-nuts could fill. Coker-nuts seemed like my only joy, sir. Life all seemed a 'owling wilderness without coker-nuts!"

"Is this boy mad?" asked Hardie despairingly of anybody who might feel disposed to answer him.

"Well, sir," hesitated Peter Morrison, "it's the general belief that he were not born insane—in fact, in some things he's 'outer than he's got any right to be at his age. He says he's fourteen and past the fifth standard, but for artfulness and cussedness he's considered to be about four hundred years old and beyond the standard of the Old Bailey. What's wrong with his head ain't exactly madness, sir, but it's swole. That's what it is—swole."

"Swole? What on earth do you mean?"

"Just that, sir. Swole—swell, swole, swell," replied Peter, kindly conjugating for his hearer's enlightenment and in his own way the verb to swell. "The boy's got a swole or swelled head through reading penny dreadfuls and a'pe'ny novelettes. He brought a boxful of 'em aboard with him, and he's for ever a-neglectin' of his dooty for to get at 'em. They've growed on him to that extent that now he can't talk like a nat'ral humming boy, but must always get a-spoutin' like them long-aired lubbers he's perpetual a-readin' of."

"We've even caught him trying to make poetry three or four times," supplemented Yaks the steward, who would have said a good deal more if he hadn't been sternly stopped.

Peter caught hold of the romantically-minded Rufus by the collar of his shirt, and vigorously shook him.

"I hope that'll frighten some o' the nonsense and ridickelous long words out o' you," he observed. "Now start again."

"I wanted some coker-nuts, sir."

"That's better," nodded Peter encouragingly.

"No doubt you've often had a go at 'em, sir, in dear Hold Hingerland, at three shies a penny, so you can understand my feelings when I see 'em growing free all around me."

"Yaks?"

"Yes, sir."

"Unless this boy tells me his story properly and straight away, at once, put him on biscuit and water for three weeks."

"Very good, sir," said the steward cheerfully. "That's the sort of treatment he's wanted all along."

"Oh, crikey!" muttered the threatened Rufus to himself, now thoroughly alarmed, and resolved to do his best to avoid having to suffer the penalty he was menaced with. In this wise intention of now telling his story "properly and straightaway," he was fairly successful, save for a little relapse here and there.

It was a very short and simple yarn he had to spin, after all.

His lucky "find" had been made merely because he was fond of cocoanuts, and eager to avail himself of the first opportunity he had ever had of getting some for nothing, and devouring them in all their native freshness and flavour. In his quest of the coveted dainties, he had presently strolled into the densest part of the natural copse.

Finding that he was only able to shake down the smallest and least satisfactory specimens, he had at last shinned up a tall tree, at the top of which hung some "beauties."

"As I made a grab at 'em, sir, there sounded a bell—soft-like, but on such a straight line with my port side ear-ole, sir, that I heard it quite distinct. I heard the ghost's bell, sir, sure enough."

"Heard what?"

"The ghost's bell—not ringing loud, sir, so that it could be heard outside the wood, but a-humming low—sort of trembling, sir."

"What do you mean by the 'ghost's bell'?"

"That's what the men were calling it last night after the gentleman died what was struck by lightning."

"Go on ahead with your yarn, but leave the ghost out of it. Let's have no more nonsense of that sort."

"Well, sir, I found myself on top of a coker-nut tree that rung a bell, anyhow, and I was so frightened at first—after what I'd heard such a talk about—that I nearly fell down. But I thought of all the 'eroes I'd ever read of, particularly of the cabin-boy who rose up to be an admiral in 'Dare-Devil Dick, or The Human Cat with Nine Lives.' I shall be 'appy to lend it to you, capt'ing, if you don't happen to have read it—"

"Now, then, you young warmint," interjected a gruff voice warningly.

"All right, Jack. I only meant to say, sir, that I made up my mind to be a fearless 'ero, too, thinking you might make a speech about me before all the crew, and give me some money if I found out what I knew you wanted to know."

"And I did, sir. I stuck up there about half-way to the sky, as brave as though I'd been born a coker-nut myself, and I found it all out."

"I've found out all about it, sir—first, by stopping where I was, and then by shinning up a lot of other trees and following up the lay of the wire. I acted noble, capt'ing!"

"The lay of the wire!"

"Yes, sir. Round the trunk at the top of the first tree there's a rusty old wire—made fast. It goes nearly to the middle of the wood, on the front of it towards the sea; it's the 'middle of the front side of the wood that I mean, sir. It runs over the tops of the shorter trees and through the big leaves at the tops of the higher ones, and it ends in a sort of large box, covered at the top and sides, but open at the front—I shall think of the proper word directly, sir. I know it was used in 'Nimble Ned, the Steeple-jack, or The Man in the Clouds.' It'll come directly. I've got it—belfry! The wire ends in a sort of a kind of wooden belfry, lashed and nailed to the top of a shorter tree than the wire starts from; and in the belfry, capt'ing, a big mouldy bell is hanging."

"A ship's bell?"

"Yes, sir."

"What the boy says is all right, sir," put in

the brawny salt Rufus addressed as Jack: "and he ain't told his yarn so bad either, after all, considerin'. Every word he's said we've put to the test, and it's every bit all right. When he grabbed for the nuts he shook the branches, and the branches shook the wire, and the wire shook the bell."

"As I made a grab at 'em there sounded a bell."

When it rung loud while ago I was swinging it. When it rung a loud before—and especial last night—the wind was blowing, and it was the wind did the trick."



"So much for the mystery of the ghostly bell," laughed Dave; "a signal-bell rigged up by castaways, and not taken down, as it ought to have been, when they got off; and we shall find that the mystery of the ghostly light will be cleared up by some explanation just as simple. In fact, I think I've tumbled to the explanation already. But lead the way, Jack. We'll start from where the wire starts, and pull up at the belfry."

(To be continued.)

True Enough.

By examining the tongue of a patient, physicians find out the diseases of the body and philosophers of the mind.

THE BLACK BOX.

(Continued from page 27).

hope of dealing with Mr. Vane, on the basis of an exchange, his uncle for the Black Box, or else in the hope of forcing the baronet to sign some paper which would give them power to take it. I think the latter is more probable, as Mr. Vane has heard nothing from them in ten days. If Sir Tracy refuses to yield, his life, I believe, will finally be taken, and he will never reappear again. In that case, there will be another attempt to steal the Black Box, and I warn you, sir," said Harley Staines, turning to Merton Vane, "that the next time the thieves come, they will come with instruments to pick the padlock, a complicated one as it is, and if you depend upon that chain to guard your treasure, you will probably lose it."

"You alarm me," said Merton Vane. "Not that I should be sorry to lose it, were it not for gratifying the scoundrels who have taken away my uncle. I will send for an engineer from Darwich to-morrow, to fit the house with burglar alarms."

"That would be a wise step," the detective agreed.

After a little more talk, he took his leave to go to Darwich, as he said, to make inquiries for the vehicle the villains must have used. Some hours later he returned unsuccessful. He appeared very tired, and went to his room early.

THE OPENING OF THE BLACK BOX.

"Hush!"
"What is it?"
"Wake. Quiet. I want your help."
George Seymour's amazement was boundless, but he realised from the detective's tone that something serious was afoot, and he got out of bed and dressed quickly. It was nearly midnight, and he had been sound asleep, when the detective entered his room.

He was soon dressed and ready. Harley Staines had closed the door, and gone to his window.

"We can get to the ground from here," he whispered.

"Yes, it will be a pretty good drop, but we can do it. We shall fall upon a soft flower-bed. But what in heaven's name is the meaning of—?"

"Do you want to be in at the death?"
"In at the death?" muttered George, mystified.

"That's what I said."
"Of course I do."
"Then come with me, without a sound."
"Shall we call Merton?"
"On your life, no."

The window was half-open, for George was of a hygienic turn. Slowly, soundlessly, Harley Staines opened it wide enough for his purpose.

The detective climbed out, hung on the sill with his hands, and dropped. He fell and rolled on a flower-bed, with hardly a sound. A minute later George joined him, on the gravel path. Harley Staines pressed a revolver into his hand.

"Take it. I have another."
Seymour's heart beat hard. His blood was thrilling in his veins.

"I am with you," he said.
"I thought I read your character aright," said the detective. "Not a word, now. Follow me!"

He silently led the way round the sleeping house to the side where the French windows of the library opened upon the lawn. A dim light glimmered from the room, and the windows were seen to be open.

George gave a start.
"Burglars," he whispered.
Harley Staines gripped his arm.
"Not a sound."

They waited. It seemed a long time that they waited, and it must really have been a quarter of an hour. Then two figures came out of the French windows, and a moment later the light in the library was extinguished. The two figures came on again, and in the dim light it could be seen that they were carrying a long, coffin-looking object between them.

They passed along the gravel walk only a few feet from the spot where the men crouched behind the rhododendrons. The detective's hand on George's lips kept him silent. But when they had gone, he spoke in a tense whisper.

"That was the Black Box?"
"Yes."
"And those two were Colonel Luscombe and my cousin Merton?"
"Yes."

"Where are they going?"
"Either to murder Sir Tracy Vane, or to dispose of his body, I am not sure which, but I think the former."
"Merciful God!"
"Follow me!"
They followed in pursuit. The starlight was

dim, but it was easy to keep the two figures in sight. The Black Box was evidently a good weight, for they proceeded very slowly.

On the west side of the grounds was a small wicket leading to the moor. There the two figures stopped, and there was the click of a key as the colonel unlocked the gate.

"Let us stop them," whispered George.
"Others are waiting to do that."
"Others?"
"Look!"

They had passed the gate. Then suddenly from the darkness a bullseye lantern gleamed out and a shout was heard. The detective raced on, George at his heels. Swift as they were, the struggle that had commenced was over before they arrived. Two men, gnashing their teeth with rage, were in the grip of three policemen, and the handcuffs were jingling on their wrists. The Black Box lay upon the ground.

"Got 'em, sir," said one of the policemen to Harley Staines. "You were right, sir."

"What does this outrage mean?" panted Merton Vane. "How dare you molest me on my own ground? What is it to you what I do with my own property?"

"It's a good deal to do with us what you do with the man you have murdered," said Harley Staines, sternly. "Open that box!"

"He isn't dead," screamed the wretched man, utterly breaking down. "I'll swear that he isn't dead, or he wasn't when I looked at him last. He is only drugged."

"Colonel Luscombe, you can open that box or we will break it open!"

The colonel, after one minute of mad rage, was himself again. He gave a mocking laugh.

"The game's up," he said. "Since you know so much, I'm glad you stopped us this side of the moor."

"Because if you had got as far as the pits it would have been a hanging matter," said the detective, sternly.

The colonel shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't ask me to incriminate myself," he laughed. "You have saved us a walk, that's all."

"Well, open the box."

The colonel knelt and felt over the shiny surface with his manacled hands. Suddenly he rose and threw back the lid.

The policeman's lanterns flashed in to the interior of the mysterious casket. There lay a man of middle age, his face white and his eyes closed as if in death.

It was the missing baronet, Sir Tracy Vane.

CLEARED UP AT LAST

It was not until the following morning that Harley Staines gave an explanation to the astonished George.

By that time the two plotters were in prison at Darwich, and the baronet was in bed at the Chase. He had not yet recovered consciousness, but he was in the doctor's hands, and the report was that his life was not in danger.

"Tell me how you know," said George. "I am utterly amazed."

"I had already formed a theory before I came to Vane Chase," said the detective, with a smile. "The Black Box formed the groundwork of it. That mysterious casket, to which no known opening existed—how easy to conceal a body therein, if by chance the opening should be found. The police made the mistake of supposing that so eminent a person as Merton Vale could not be suspected; and the fame of the Black Box as a casket having no known opening prevented the idea of that from crossing their minds."

"But it crossed yours?"

Harley Staines smiled.
"Yes, it crossed mine. What I saw at the Chase confirmed my theory in every way. In spite of what I said to the colonel, I saw that there would be a very real difficulty in getting a man over the garden wall without detection or alarm. And why should they carry him off?"

"You gave a very good reason yesterday why they should."

The detective smiled again.
"The wisdom of the serpent," he said. "I was careful to say that it was not a theory, but only what might have happened. So it might; but as a matter of fact, it didn't."

George laughed.
"You had already decided to mislead the colonel and Merton?"

"Yes. The moment I saw the colonel I read what kind of man he was, and I was not long in summing up your cousin. The colonel was long in India, which would explain many things; such as the story of the fictitious Indian—"

"Jamsetjee? Why, I saw the man myself."
"Yes, and that made me doubtful for a time; but you gave me the clue when you naively said that he was a man about the colonel's build."

George stared in amazement.

"The colonel himself!"
"Yes, in a cunning disguise. I daresay he had acted the character before in regimental theatricals. Now, given the Black Box as the

Grins From and For Our Readers.

HERE'S your chance! Send in some "Grins." We will award prizes to all we can each week, and the sender will get a HANDSOME LIBRARY VOLUME for each "Grin" printed in this column. Cut out the Coupon on this page, pin or stick it on a sheet of paper, write your "Grin" underneath it, then add your name and address, and post to GORDON PHILLIP HOOD, 13, Farringdon Avenue, London, with the word "GRINS" in the top left-hand corner of envelope. Each "Grin" must have a coupon attached.)

FUNNY CUTS GRIN, LIMERICK, OR PRESENT COUPON.

Name.....
Address.....
July 22.....
NOTE.—This Coupon is good for one "Grin," one Present Application, or one Limerick only.

Pin or stick this Coupon to a sheet of paper. Each "Grin" must have a Coupon attached.

WINNERS FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 24.

They Whistled.

Two forlorn looking tramps were just entering a town in New York, after a weary walk of 12 miles up railroad, when they espied a notice board with the solitary word, "whistle" on it, intended, of course, for the use of railway engine drivers only. Looking sorrowfully at each other, one said: "Well, Jack, I don't feel much like whistling, but I expect we'd better try."

Book Prize Won by

A. Davis, 59, Silver Street, Stepney, E.

hiding-place of the missing man, it was evident that only some of the inmates of the Chase could have put him there. The heir of the chase was a weak, dissolute fellow, under the influence of an unscrupulous card-sharper. Upon him my thoughts naturally turned first. You may have noticed how yesterday I pretended to have the power to open the box—

"Then you could not really have done it?"
"I hadn't the faintest idea how to open it. It was not part of my game to really open it. I wanted to put my theory to the test. The result more than satisfied me. Merton Vane was scared at the idea, almost past self-control, and the colonel could hardly contain himself. I fully believe that Luscombe would have used violence if I had attempted to lay a hand on the box. But I was satisfied; my next step was to lead them on a false scent, by propounding a theory which would lead them to suppose that I was far from guessing the truth. I wished to bring matters to a head at once; for I was practically convinced that the baronet was in the Black Box, alive or dead, and yet I had no legal authority to insist upon its being opened."

"I understand your motives now. I was puzzled at the time. Then your suggestion that the box might be carried off—"
"That was to put the idea into their heads. This was their position; they had been terrified by my declaration that I could open the Black Box, and they knew that if it should ever be opened their game was up. They saw a way of getting rid of it without exciting suspicion. They resolved to do it at once. You know that the police have been searching the pits on the moor. If the Black Box were hurled into a pit already searched by the police, it might remain undiscovered till doomsday."

"The cunning scoundrels! And my poor uncle alive!"

"I was sure that he was alive. For consider, when the scoundrels resolved that Merton Vane should step into Sir Tracy's fortune, they had naturally hesitated at murder. The most reckless criminal would not put his neck into a noose if he could achieve his purpose in any other way. There was another way open here. The Anglo-Indian colonel was doubtless acquainted with some powerful Oriental drug; it would be easy for so unsuspected a person as the baronet's own nephew to administer it to him, and then the Black Box would do the rest. The colonel had discovered the secret opening; whether he had known the Black Box in native hands in India, or whether his ingenuity discovered the secret, I cannot say, but he knew the opening, and it was certainly that which suggested the whole plot to them."

"Doubtless, it never crossed anybody's mind that the opening might have been discovered. Hundreds of men had tried to discover it in vain."

"True; but all my theory rested upon the assumption that it had been found, and kept secret by the finder; and I was satisfied that my theory was correct. They had drugged the baronet and placed him in the casket. They intended to keep him there for a time, till they had seen how the wind blew. If suspicion was directed to them, if the truth came out, why there was the man living, and their lives at least were in no danger. While on the other hand if suspicion were not aroused, if the police went off on the false scent so obligingly provided by the colonel in the character of Jamsetjee, then

their course would be clear. They could keep the casket there till it was safe to remove it, and then get rid of it, and the baronet with it, a deed which would then bring no risks.

"I was on the watch last night. At midnight I saw them meet and go to the library, and then I stole to your room, and you know the rest. I know that the climax had come."

"You are a wonderful man, Mr. Staines."

Harley Staines smiled.

"I have had the satisfaction of baffling two scoundrels, and of saving your uncle's life. I have only one disappointment; that Colonel Luscombe cannot be hanged. The Black Box has saved his life; for I believe that had it not been for that, the plotters would have taken the greater risk of killing the baronet outright. The Black Box has saved both villain and victim; not one of the least peculiar circumstances in its strange history."

Sir Tracy Vane recovered from the effects of the drug and his terrible confinement, though he was never quite the same man again. His gratitude to the detective knew no bounds. The two wretches were both severely dealt with, and Sir Tracy, by making a new will wholly in favour of George Seymour, effectually guarded against any further attempts on the part of his villainous nephew. Harley Staines went back to London with a substantial cheque in his pocket, his reward for solving the mystery of the Black Box.

THE END.

** We are obliged to hold over the Office Boy's Column this week.

DAILY SEA TRIPS
by
NEW PALACE STEAMERS,
to
SOUTHEND, MARGATE, and RAMSGATE
and Back, Daily by
"ROYAL SOVEREIGN"
From Old Swan Pier (West side London Bridge)
at 9.20 a.m.
Special Train Fenchurch Street, 10.23 a.m. (Sundays 10 a.m.). St. Pancras, 9.53 a.m. (Sundays 9.40 a.m.).
and to
SOUTHEND, MARGATE, RAMSGATE, DEAL, DOVER, and Back,
Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
Not calling at Deal on Sundays.
(Saturdays to SOUTHEND and MARGATE and back only) by
"KOH-I-NOOR"
From Tilbury at 9.30 a.m. (Sundays 11 a.m.)
Trains from Fenchurch Street, 8.27 a.m. (Sundays 10 a.m.)
St. Pancras 8 a.m. (Sundays 9.40 a.m.)
HUSBANDS' BOAT, "KOH-I-NOOR,"
to MARGATE,
from Tilbury on Saturdays. Tender "Mermaid" from Old Swan Pier, at 1.50 p.m. Special Express Train, Fenchurch Street, 3.25 p.m.; St. Pancras, 2.40 p.m. For fares and further particulars apply to T. E. BARLOW, Director, 50, King William Street, E.C.

From 5/- Monthly. Sample £10-10 Cycle for Cash, £4-15. Dunlop Free Wheel, 3 Brakes, carriage paid. Cycles from £2-10. Sample £22 Motor Cycle £30. List Free.—Derham Road Cycle Co., Norwich.

WORK FOR ALL.
We give a Nickel-Silver Timekeeper and Mexican Silver Watch Chain, with guarantee to keep correct time for three years, or a Lady's or Gent's Rolled Gold Ring, free to any person calling 48 Penny Pictorial Postcards within 21 days. You can sell them in an hour. Send name and address (Postcard will do).
BRITISH FINE ART CO. (F.C. Dept.), 115, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

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Allowed on every cycle bought of us. Your money in full refunded without question if not perfectly satisfactory. Highest grade, warranted six years.
Coventry Made Cycles
LATEST MODELS £2-10 to £6
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200 Second-Hand Cycles
all makes, £1 to £2-10 good as new.
Great Factory Clearing Sale at half prices. taking orders from sample machine furnished by us. Active agents wanted in each district. Large profits easily made. Write at once for free catalogue and our special offer.
Tyres, Sundries, Sewing Machines, Phonos, &c., half prices.
HEAD CYCLE CO., Dept. 48D
91, Paradise St., Liverpool, and 19, Charing Cross Road, London.

REMEMBER WE ARE OFFERING YOU SIX FIRST CLASS CRICKET SETS THIS WEEK.

His Tumbler Was Empty.



"WHAT do you think of that whisky, old man?"
"I never can express an opinion on so small an acquaintance!"

FIGHTING CLERGY.



GRINSOME: "They're making the clergymen fight for the Japanese."
WHISKERS: "Go away!"
GRINSOME: "Yes, they're using the Canons on board the cruisers."

AIN'T IT, THOUGH?



COUNTRYMAN: "If you please, sir, wud you be so kind as to tell me the name of them fine houzes?"
FELLOW PASSENGER: "Those are orphan homes."
"An' does orphans live there?"
"You've guessed it."
"Well, ain't it a splendid thing to be born an orphan?"

NOT WHAT HE WANTED.



1.—MILD AND BITTER desires to possess



2.—Old Fattsides' watch, and was just about



3.—To pinch it, when he discovered it to be



4.—Attached to an electric battery.

YOUNG CUB!



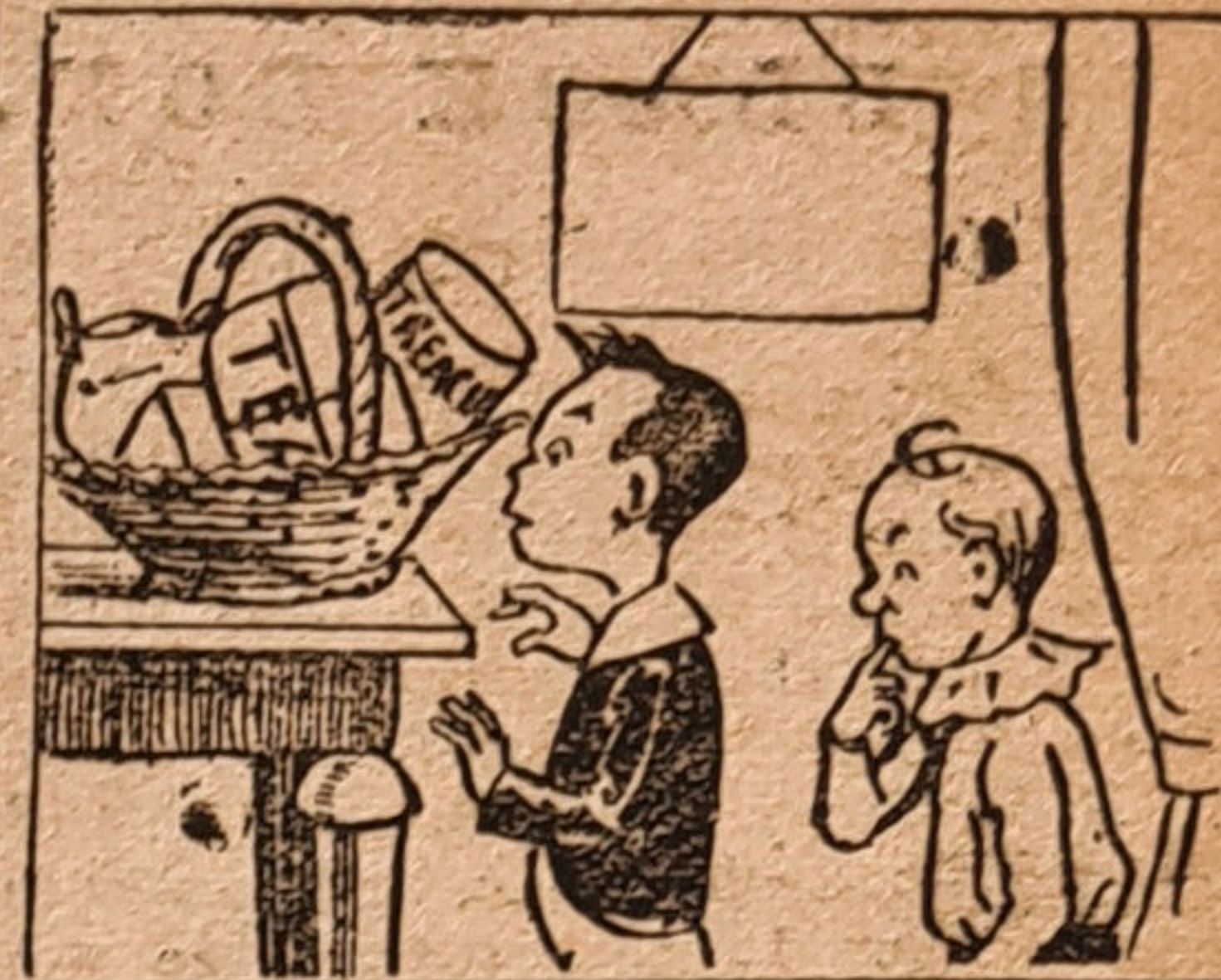
OLD GENT: "Anything fresh, boy?"
NEWSBOY: "Well, I ain't going to toll yor the noos for nuffink, you bet!"

Engaged in Missionary Work

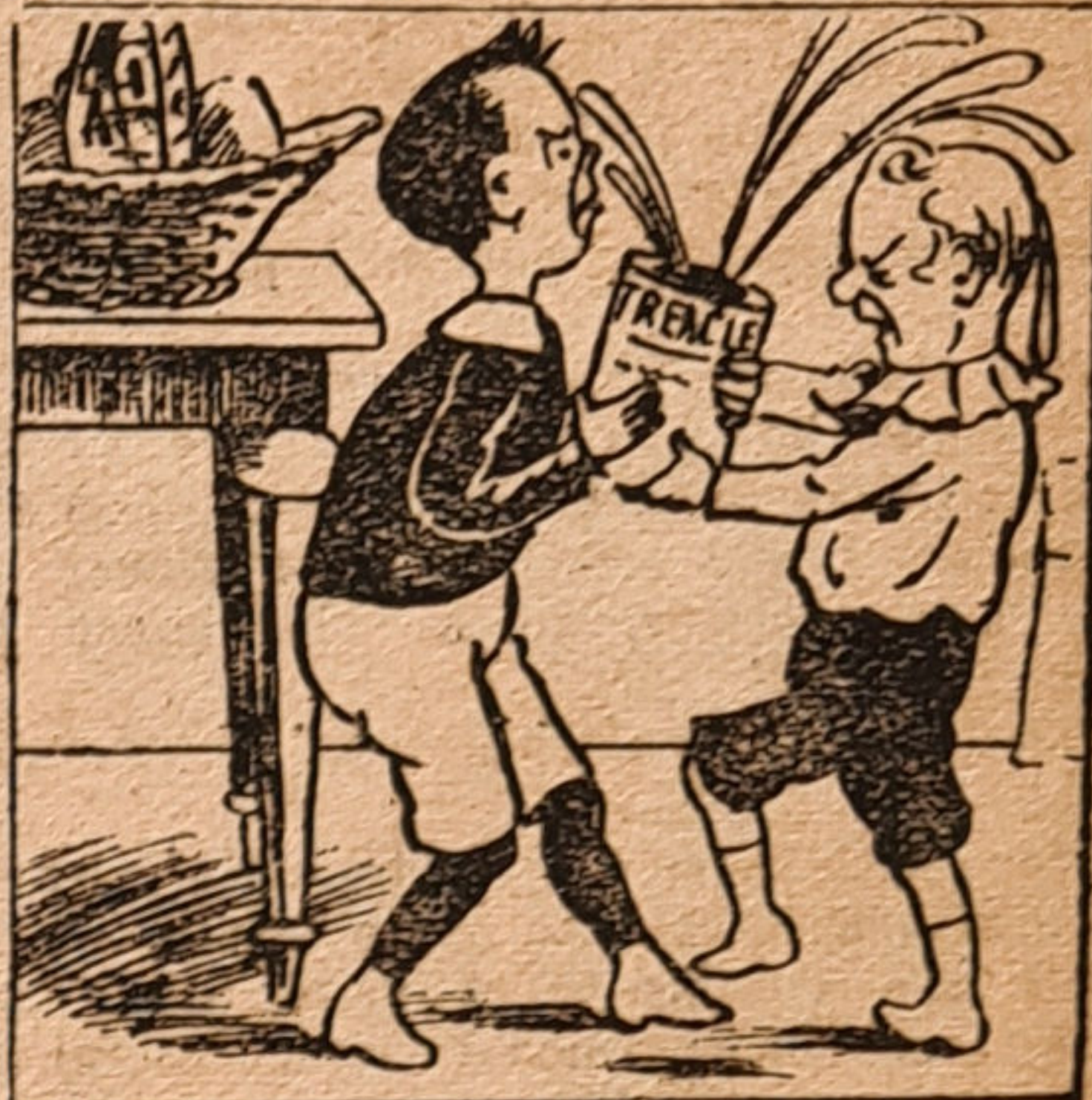


PASTOR: "Miss Ethel, you should be engaged in some missionary work."
MISS ETHEL: "Oh, I am, and have been for some time past."
PASTOR: "I'm so grateful to hear you say so. In what part are you engaged?"
MISS ETHEL (proudly): "In teaching my parrot not to swear."

THE HEAT WAVE.



1.—FREDDY: "Let's see what mother's been buying. Oh, I say, treacle!"



2.—Jimmy: "Lemme see."
Freddy: "No, you leggo. There, you done it now."



3.—Freddy: "Ain't I sticky, that's all. I wonder what's in this parcel? Oh, Jimini! I thought it was sweets."



4.—Freddy: "Yes, ma, we was just peepin' in the basket, when the treacle tin exploded, an' before we could ex-cape, the tea busted all over us. We fink it's the hot weather."
When ma found the stick it became hotter than ever.

AN EASY SETTLEMENT.



1.—PROFESSOR BOOMDEAY: "So you want a settlement, do ye, and will take a note?"



2.—"Well, I think I can manage that much. Oh, yes, I think—"



3.—"You said a note, I believe? How does that suit you?"

THE EXAMS DID HIM



"I was cultivated at Oxford."
"Yes, my brother said you were ploughed."